

1984
Purdue Calumet

SKYLARK

MAGAZINE





Skylark

*"The blue deep thou wingest,
And singing still dost soar, and
soaring ever singest."*

Percy Bysshe Shelley

This year's edition is as much a change in style and direction as the cover logo is from the one above. Our editorial philosophy remains securely based in both quality and creativity. Enjoy!

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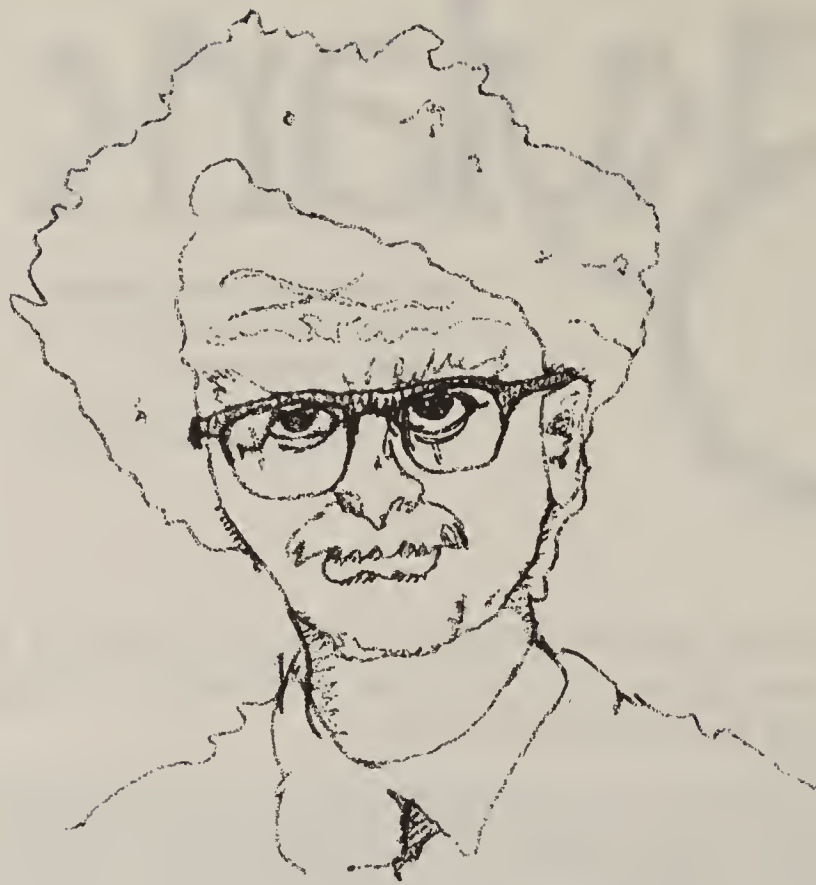
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Dr. Tuckey & Mr. Twain

On October 24, 1983, Dr. John S. Tuckey announced his decision to step down as head of the English and Philosophy department at Purdue Calumet. In an administrative career that has spanned more than two decades, Dr. Tuckey has served the department and the university well. His reputation as a Twain scholar far exceeds the need for corroboration in this publication. Indeed, he has graced the pages of more illustrious journals and deservedly so. However, Dr. Tuckey has another reputation, one not so well known, except on this campus. He is a modest and gracious gentleman who has enriched the lives of students and staff alike. We are very honored, therefore, to publish the following interview:

Interviewer: Dr. Tuckey, how do you feel about retiring as department chairman—personally that is?

Tuckey: I feel comfortable at staying so long in this position and with this as the time to step down. I know that is the usual response given to your question, but it is a genuine one. I am looking forward to teaching again and of course my research projects at University of California, Berkeley. In what the sociologists call a role exit, it is high time as well as a good time for me to put forth more sustained and regular effort in my own field.

I: How long has it been since you taught?

T: Two years. Although, I've directed some independent studies in American literature on the graduate level since then, and last week I lectured, rather too long I'm afraid, in the American Humor course, 456.

I: If you had any free time, using the term loosely, what would you most enjoy doing?

T: I suppose reading. Reading more deeply and fully in my own field and in other areas which interest me. Doing more writing.

I: We know what your main interest is, but is Twain also your favorite author? After working so closely with his material, can you or do you read his work for pleasure even now?

T: Yes, he remains pretty high on my list as a favorite. There are so many leftovers, unpublished material that no one has collected yet, that I don't have a sense of having run out of new material or his stories to read. Another favorite of mine is Thoreau.

I: While we're discussing the discovery of new Twain material, how did you feel when you first suspected that the "Mysterious Stranger" had textual problems? Was it more thrilling or frightening?

T: It was actually a rather gradual process of discovery. I had, in a way, been prepared for it. Still there was the sense of adventuring into a quagmire. Quite a bit about Twain's story had been assumed on the basis of the Paine/Duneka text. It remains astonishing to me that DeVoto could have been so casual. He obviously had the opportunity to find how Twain's own manuscripts differed from the published story. Why didn't he? His "Symbols of Despair" essay, beautifully written, seemed to have assumed a chronology that was completely wrong.

I: For all of your accomplishments, you are a modest man. What keeps John Tuckey humble?

T: When I get to feeling a grand sense of my own self-worth, I go into a closet and whistle "Hail to the Chief!" No, no, I'm not serious about that. I suppose it's my having come along at the right time. I found a chance to literally plunge into the mind of Mark Twain. If anything, it is that mind, his marvelously rich imagination playing on the broad canvas of the human scene and mankind's endeavor. I fell into it at the right time. Somebody else could have done it given the right amount of interest.

I: Do you have any advice for writers, people who are just getting started, such as those who contribute to this magazine?

T: Find those things that you feel deeply about, that excite you, that puzzle you, yes, that even trouble you. Explore them. Ask yourself why they excite you, puzzle you, or even trouble you. Get the knack of exploring in words. You'll soon be a writer. What you write will resound in the hearts and minds of others.

I: Dr. Tuckey, you, if anyone does, know the mind of Mark Twain. What kind of advice do you think he might have had for writers? What would be a characteristic response from him to this question?

T: How would he have answered? I'd better think a minute. I suppose he would tell them to do as he did. He would say get yourself a job on a paper.

I: Is there anything else you'd like to say? Any point you want to make or question you wanted to be asked?

T: No, I'm satisfied. Twain, on the other hand, liked to interview his interviewer. He wrote several pieces about turning the tables that way. In one of them, he was trying to sell the man his house. I don't have anything to sell you. I will say, though, that I'll be 63 this summer. I haven't started taking doddering lessons yet. And I have sent in my subscription for a lifetime membership to the *Mark Twain Journal*, even though some might not think that is practical.

>> While Dr. Tuckey will be missed in his role as department chairman, we feel very fortunate to have him continue his position here as friend and teacher.

S. Littleton-Uetz, Editor

Once
I had a stuffed oil-cloth dog
But it tore and the stuffing fell out.

Once
I had a kitten, ginger and white
But a car ran over it.

Once
I had a mother and father
But death took them away.

Then
I had a husband, with love
All shining and new.

Then
I had a house, full of laughter
And children's piping voices.

Then
I had graduations and showers
And weddings to keep me busy.

Now
My love has grown cold
And my house has grown old.

Now
The children's laughter
And shrill voices are more subdued.

Now
I have no pressing events
To occupy my time.

Still
There must be other love
If I would but seek it.

Still
Another generation fills my
Heart with joy.

Still
I have my hopes and dreams
That I can but pursue.

Again
I feel the pulse of love
Within my being quicken.

Again
I chase the dreams I had
But on a further horizon.

Again
I feel quite strong
And wise enough to build
Again.

Sue Romesburg

Sue Romesburg worked on the *Skylark* staff for several years. This edition is dedicated as a memorial to the creative energy and commitment that she not only gave to the magazine, but more importantly, that she gave to life.

FOR Sue Romesburg

Russian tea always reminds me of Sue Romesburg. Here's why. There were only eight of us that summer in the three-week, intensive, 500-level "Reading and Writing the Short Story" class: me—the instructor; four harried high school English teachers picking up fast credits towards their Master's Degrees; and three creative writing folk in love with putting words on paper. Sue Romesburg was one of the latter. This mother of two, wife of some thirty years, returnee-to-college had already won several first prizes at PUC and downstate in the Literary Contests' Best Informal Essay Category. (Charlie would quote aloud from her essays to the delight of everyone in the English Office.) Now Sue wanted to try her hand at short fiction. That first class session dragged along rather raggedly, perhaps because we met during the three hottest hours of the summer afternoon, perhaps because Creative Writers always seem to be vaguely sparring with each other from some introspective Point-of-View. Except Sue. Right away, even the most self-engrossed of us could see that Sue—warm, direct, open—would be our center, our precipitating force. As the jargon goes, she "reached out" to all of us. Thus, it was only a small wonder that the next class session, after sweating (literally) for an hour and a half through the circumlocations of Henry James's prose, Sue brought forth from a brown grocery bag she'd lugged into class a 20-cup aluminum urn for heating water, a nested cylinder of styro-foam cups, plastic spoons, and a quart jar of brownish stuff. "Have some Russian Tea," she counseled us. "We need a pick-me-up during our break." Sue's Russian Tea break soon became the high point of our daily sessions. Even our most lumpish, introspective member gaily offered to fill the pot; someone brought cookies. A constructive, almost festive, air gradually diffused throughout the whole 3-hour sessions: the first half of the class passed in happy anticipation; the latter half in contented repleteness. Sue's Tea Break turned out to be our most creative time, the time we fused our Creative

Writing with our actual lives. I still remember our astonishment when, in response to someone's concern about depicting a character smitten with a heart attack, Sue casually offered up her own experience as a test for verisimilitude. This dynamic and indefatigable lady, it seemed, had had two heart attacks. (Yet at this time Sue was working almost full time, taking classes, and running a home.) Her experiential account proved helpful; the best thing in that student's story was the cardiac arrest scene. Interestingly enough, Sue's own written stories seemed flat when compared to her earlier essays; indeed, her stories only turned lively when they would slip, willy-nilly, back into her humorous personal essay style. Seems she couldn't keep her writing fictional—reality kept intruding. Luckily. For her voice—warm, droll, faintly quizzical and, in a joyous way, innocent—is what I want to hear now when I take down from my kitchen shelf Sue's jar of Russian Tea. At our class's end Sue had refilled it and had given it to me: "Here. It's for you; you enjoy the tea so much." True. I enjoyed Sue so much.

Shirley Staton

*for Sue Romesburg
(in memoriam)*

*you were as you were:
humorous, direct,
compassionate,
whimsical,
a laughter of lilacs,
an afternoon of roses:*

*you were
and still are
the philosopher
among us: the seeker,
the singer,
the power of flowers:*

*you wove daisies
and dusk
into dreams
for tomorrow,
you wove sunlight
and marigolds
into the fabric
of courage*

*for love
and for loving
you were one of a kind:
a laughter of lilacs,
an afternoon of roses*

Charlie

BLUES FOR

2nd Place Prose Award

Johnny One Shoe

A
One-Act Play
By
Gentry Lee Smith

Characters:

Pvt. Raymond
Pfc. Kramer
Song
Sgt. Miller
Corp. Alphabet

PLACE: Pleiku, South Vietnam.
TIME: Sunday, May 17, 1966:
0400 hours.

SETTING: A deserted hooch near a
battered airstrip.

Song enters the scene wearing a mini-skirt and a low cut blouse. She has a handbag which has a long strap and hangs to her waist. She flicks on a switch that not only brings up the lights inside the hooch but also causes a red revolving light to come to life outside it as well. There are no windows inside but on the front and rear doors are port holes to look out of. On a wall is a sign that says BRAVO COMPANY EVAC. DAYROOM. A broken table, chairs, and eating utensils are in disarray on the floor. Song begins going through the mess piece by piece and occasionally places an object inside her handbag. The sound of a large truck pulling up causes her to stop. She reaches inside her handbag and takes out a lipstick. As she's applying it, Pfc. Kramer enters the scene carrying a duffle bag and the sound of the truck leaving is heard. She puts away the lipstick and greets him with open arms.

SONG: Sa-ay, G.I., I been waitin' fo
you, baby!

PFC. KRAMER: For me?
(She runs to him and grips him
tightly.)

SONG: Welcome to g-e-o-r-jus
Pleiku! (She lifts his wallet.) Welcome
to won-a-ful new duty! (She lifts his
pocket lighter and places it and the
wallet inside her hand bag.) Welcome
to....

PFC. KRAMER: Lady, lady, give
me air!

(He gently pushes her back.)

SONG: What s'matter—you no like
girls?

PFC. KRAMER: Sure... I like 'em.

SONG: Number one!

(She goes after him again but he
holds her back.)

PFC. KRAMER: But I like to do the
grabbing—understand?

SONG: Humph! I think maybe you
... how you say?

(She makes a hand gesture indicating
that she thinks he's gay.)

PFC. KRAMER: Who are you—the
fairy finder? Ain't this Bravo Com-
pany's hooch?

(He puts his duffle bag on the floor.)

SONG: You M.P.?

PFC. KRAMER: I'm a medic.

SONG: You medic officer?

PFC. KRAMER: Yeah... a Four
Star General.

SONG: Bulls-hit! You Private First
Class, G.I.

(She turns and starts walking away.)

PFC. KRAMER: Where is
everyone? Hey, you!

(He runs after her, takes her by the
arm, and brings her back to the center
of the room. She struggles and tries to
kick him.)

SONG: You number ten! Dinky
dow! Dinky dow!

PFC. KRAMER: Speak English!

SONG: You crazy!

PFC. KRAMER: Lady, you ain't
seen crazy. If I don't get some answers
... I'll show you crazy.

(He releases her and she rubs her
arm.)

Gentry Lee Smith: recipient of the
Sigrid Stark, the Purdue Literary, and the
College Theatre Festival awards.

PFC. KRAMER: Now...where are the guys who maintain this dump?
(Song shrugs and Pfc. Kramer shakes her.)

PFC. KRAMER: Where!

SONG: I no kno'!

PFC. KRAMER: You're lying.

SONG: I no lie.

PFC. KRAMER: Why did they go?

(Song doesn't reply and Pfc. Kramer is about to shake her.)

SONG: V.C. bomb las' night...all soldier go.

PFC. KRAMER: You mean...you and I are all alone?

(Song nods yes.)

PFC. KRAMER: You telling me I'm in the middle of a Goddamn battlefield by myself?

SONG: I here, too.

(Pfc. Kramer picks up a chair and sits down wearily.)

PFC. KRAMER: Excuse my lack of enthusiasm.

SONG: (Yawns) Soldier come...you wait.

PFC. KRAMER: Did they tack a note on the door?

SONG: (Giggles) You funny fellow.
(Pfc. Kramer stands and extends his arm to Song.)

PFC. KRAMER: Pinch me—I'm dreaming.

SONG: What you say?

PFC. KRAMER: Haven't you ever been pinched?

SONG: In club.

PFC. KRAMER: So pinch me, so I can wake up.

(He wiggles her arm at her. She giggles and gooses him and he yells.)

SONG: You 'wake now?

PFC. KRAMER: Yeah—thanks.
(He places his duffle bag on a chair and begins searching through it.)

PFC. KRAMER: I spend half a day riding here from Saigon...

SONG: Saigon! Plenty family in Saigon.
(She takes a picture out of her handbag and shows it to him.)

SONG: You know girl—yes!
(He studies the picture, shakes his head no, and resumes searching.)

PFC. KRAMER: I get here and no one else is. See Sergeant Miller they said...

SONG: Sergeant number ten.
PFC. KRAMER: All I've seen is you and this mess. You ain't wearing stripes and your eyes ain't round, so you ain't him. (He looks at her.) Who are you?

SONG: Who you?

PFC. KRAMER: (Smiles) Ah. You ask—why? You M.P.? You officer?

SONG: (Smiles) Okay, okay. I Song.
PFC. KRAMER: I'm Kramer from South Philly.

(He takes one last look inside his bag.)
PFC. KRAMER: Nothing...and I'm starving.

SONG: What s'matter—you hungry?

PFC. KRAMER: Song, my stomach thinks my throat's slit.
(She reaches inside her handbag and takes out a large knife. He eases back.)

SONG: What s'matter you?

PFC. KRAMER: (Points at knife.) That's the matter me.
(She reaches inside her handbag and takes out a candy bar. She gives it to him.)

SONG: You one strange G.I.
(She cuts the candy bar and gives him the smaller piece.)

PFC. KRAMER: Why's my piece smaller?

SONG: Ah. You want big piece?
(She comes close and holds the knife on him.) Where's yo' weapon?

PFC. KRAMER: Bravo Company's got it.

SONG: (Nibbles on candy.) Um-m.
So sorry. No big gun...no big piece.
(Pfc. Kramer smiles and places his piece of candy in his mouth.)

SONG: Maybe we work somethin' out—yes?

(She takes him by the hand and leads him to a chair. She sits in his lap and touches his watch.)

SONG: Very nice...you sell?

PFC. KRAMER: Can't—it was a gift.

SONG: From wife?

PFC. KRAMER: My folks.

SONG: (Giggles) So...you babysan—right?

PFC. KRAMER: I'm nineteen...how big do babies get here?

SONG: Man have wife—he papa-san. Woman have husband—she mamasan. You no married—you babysan.

PFC. KRAMER: You a mamasan?

SONG: I number one babysan. You new in country—s'true?

PFC. KRAMER: True.

SONG: Fo' sure. You no understand Vietnamese even tee tee much.

PFC. KRAMER: What means tee tee?

SONG: Means little bit.
PFC. KRAMER: What means more—you know a lot?

SONG: Say boo coo.
PFC. KRAMER: B-o-o-c-o-o.
(They laugh. Pfc. Kramer takes Song by the hand and they stand close.)

PFC. KRAMER: I (Points to himself.) like you (Points to her.) boo coo.
(He spreads his arms wide and she giggles, then feels his muscles.)

SONG: You number one. You like?
(She purses her lips as if smoking a joint.)

PFC. KRAMER: That's...how you say—illegal?

SONG: You 'fraid? No one see.
(She reaches inside her bosom, takes out a joint, and gives it to him. She lights it with a match and watches him slowly inhale the smoke.)

SONG: How you like?
PFC. KRAMER: (Blows smoke.) Num-b-e-r one.

SONG: (Smiles) You learn quick.
(She takes the joint out of his mouth and puts it in hers.)

SONG: You have girlfriend in States?

(She inhales the pungent smoke.)

PFC. KRAMER: Girlfriend with an s as in many.

(Song takes the joint from her mouth and puts it back into his.)

SONG: So-o. You boo coo butterfly?

PFC. KRAMER: (Puffs) Butterfly?

SONG: Fo' sure. You spread yo' love like georjus butterfly.

(She begins to flutter around the room. Pfc. Kramer takes one last drag, drops the joint, and flutters after her. They meet and embrace.)

PFC. KRAMER: Butterfly caught.

SONG: H-m-m-m. Me want short time you.

(She begins to unbutton his shirt and licks her tongue out at him.)

PFC. KRAMER: Ain't there a rule about messing around?

(She unzips his fly.)

SONG: I no mess around, baby.

(She pulls him to the floor and starts unbuttoning her blouse.)

PFC. KRAMER: Listen.

SONG: I no hear nothin'.

(She is in the midst of unbuttoning her blouse when the faint sound of a jeep engine is heard. Song smiles and shrugs. He pulls her up with him and begins to fumble between buttoning his shirt and her blouse. The sound of the jeep engine increases.)

PFC. KRAMER: Oh, s-shit!

SONG: You one 'fraid soldier boy.

(She stands posed sexily and watches him sweat. The jeep engine is gunned once, then goes silent. Offstage, the low keyed Southern drawl of Pvt. Raymond is heard.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Hey, Miller—prick head—I'm back!

(He is on crutches and has his left foot heavily bandaged. He pushes the door open with a crutch and enters the scene just as Pfc. Kramer is buttoning Song's top blouse button.)

SONG: Johnny, Johnny, I been waitin' fo' you, baby!

(She runs to him and covers his face with kisses. Pfc. Kramer salutes.)

PVT. RAYMOND: At ease. I'm jus' a shuck and jive private.

PFC. KRAMER: (Sighs) I thought you were an officer.

(Pvt. Raymond walks to Pfc. Kramer and they shake hands.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Don't cuss me, son. Name's Johnny Raymond.

PFC. KRAMER: Kramer...Pete...from South Philadelphia.

PVT. RAYMOND: Well Kramer—Pete, where's ol' Sergeant Miller and the boys?

(Pvt. Raymond walks to a chair and sits down. Pfc. Kramer and Song follow him.)

PFC. KRAMER: I dunno...I just got here.

(Song finishes buttoning her top blouse button.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Yeah?

SONG: V.C. bomb las' night and...

PVT. RAYMOND: And Bravo ran like jack rabbits with Miller leading 'em.

PFC. KRAMER: You don't like this Miller do you?

(Pvt. Raymond takes out cigarette makings and begins to roll him a smoke.)

PVT. RAYMOND: No.

(Song sits in Pvt. Raymond's lap. Pfc. Kramer gets on the floor and sits on his duffle bag.)

SONG: Johnny, where you go so long?

PVT. RAYMOND: Know that stockade at Phu Bien?

SONG: (Frowns) Number ten.

PFC. KRAMER: Been a guest of Uncle Sam, huh?

PVT. RAYMOND: He may be an uncle to you but he'll always be a mother to me...if you get my drift?

(He puts his cigarette in his mouth and Song lights it with a match.)

PFC. KRAMER: What they bust you for, Raymond?

PVT. RAYMOND: (Blows smoke.) Destruction of government property.



(He holds up his bandaged left foot briefly.)

SONG: Po' Johnny. Po' Johnny one shoe.

PFC. KRAMER: You're shittin' me ...you shot yourself?

PVT. RAYMOND: S'long, sad story. I'll live.

(Song whispers into Pvt. Raymond's ear. He looks at Kramer and nods. She whispers a second time and they both laugh.)

PFC. KRAMER: Something funny?

PVT. RAYMOND: She says you remind her of me...fifteen months ago.

(Song begins to giggle.)

PFC. KRAMER: What's the joke?

PVT. RAYMOND: With the exception she said that you're either a cherry boy or homo. She don't know which.

PFC. KRAMER: The lady's a nut, Raymond.

SONG: He funny fellow, Johnny.

(She giggles again.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Lady? Kramer —Pete, Song ain't a lady. She's a whore.

(Song gets up and stands before Pvt. Raymond.)

SONG: What you say? If I no lady what I doin' wit' this?

(She thrusts her hips out at him and points to her vagina.)

SONG: Maybe you hatch like chicken...no need lady for that!

(Pvt. Raymond throws up his hands in mock self defense.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Chou hoi! Chou hoi!

(Song fakes indignation, takes out a compact, and powders her face.)

PFC. KRAMER: (Stands) They all like her?

PVT. RAYMOND: Only the live ones.

(He tries to grab Song's rear end but she moves out of his reach.)

PVT. RAYMOND: (Stands) What's the mess and barracks look like?

PFC. KRAMER: Run that by me again.

PVT. RAYMOND: Out back—the Whatcha been doing that's more important than eating and sleeping?

PFC. KRAMER: Look, I ate before you got here.

W(Pvt. Raymond zips up Pfc. Kramer's fly.)

PVT. RAYMOND: I jus' bet you on the jeep's horn is beeped twice.)

(She runs to look out of the port hole on the front door.)

PVT. RAYMOND: It's Alphabet.

PFC. KRAMER: Alpha who?

(He walks to the front door. Song brings me. He's Polish...got one of those last names with a hundred letters in it.)

PVT. RAYMOND: The fella that

brung me. He's Polish...got one of those last names with a hundred letters in it.

PVT. RAYMOND: The fella that

brung me. He's Polish...got one of those last names with a hundred letters in it.

PVT. RAYMOND: The fella that

brung me. He's Polish...got one of those last names with a hundred letters in it.

SONG: Bah! He number ten M.P. what's he want?

PFC. KRAMER: He's waving... (Pvt. Raymond joins Pfc. Kramer at the front door.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Probably for somebody to get my duffle bag.

(He begins to signal to the M.P. and Song grabs his arm.)

SONG: What fo' you do that, Johnny?

PVT. RAYMOND: My duffle bag ain't gonna walk in here. Maybe you'd like to get it...seeing how you been missing me...waiting and such.

SONG: No can do! No can do! (Pvt. Raymond tries to muscle Song out of the door. She struggles.)

PVT. RAYMOND: C'mon, yella mama. Whatcha got to hide?

PFC. KRAMER: Cool it. I'll go. (Pvt. Raymond lets Song go, then blocks Pfc. Kramer's path using a crutch.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Soft hearts make easy targets—stay put. We'll let ol' Alphabet bust his butt and bring it.

(The jeep's horn is beeped three times.)

SONG: I go. No like soldier police. (She begins walking toward the rear exit. Pvt. Raymond throws a crutch at her and hits the rear door. She stops.)

PFC. KRAMER: Are you wacko, Raymond?

PVT. RAYMOND: Yeah. (Pfc. Kramer approaches Song and she turns with her knife out.)

SONG: Stay 'way. All soldier number ten!

PFC. KRAMER: Hey, Song, it's me ...the Philly butterfly.

(He tries to flutter close but she stops him with a knife thrust.)

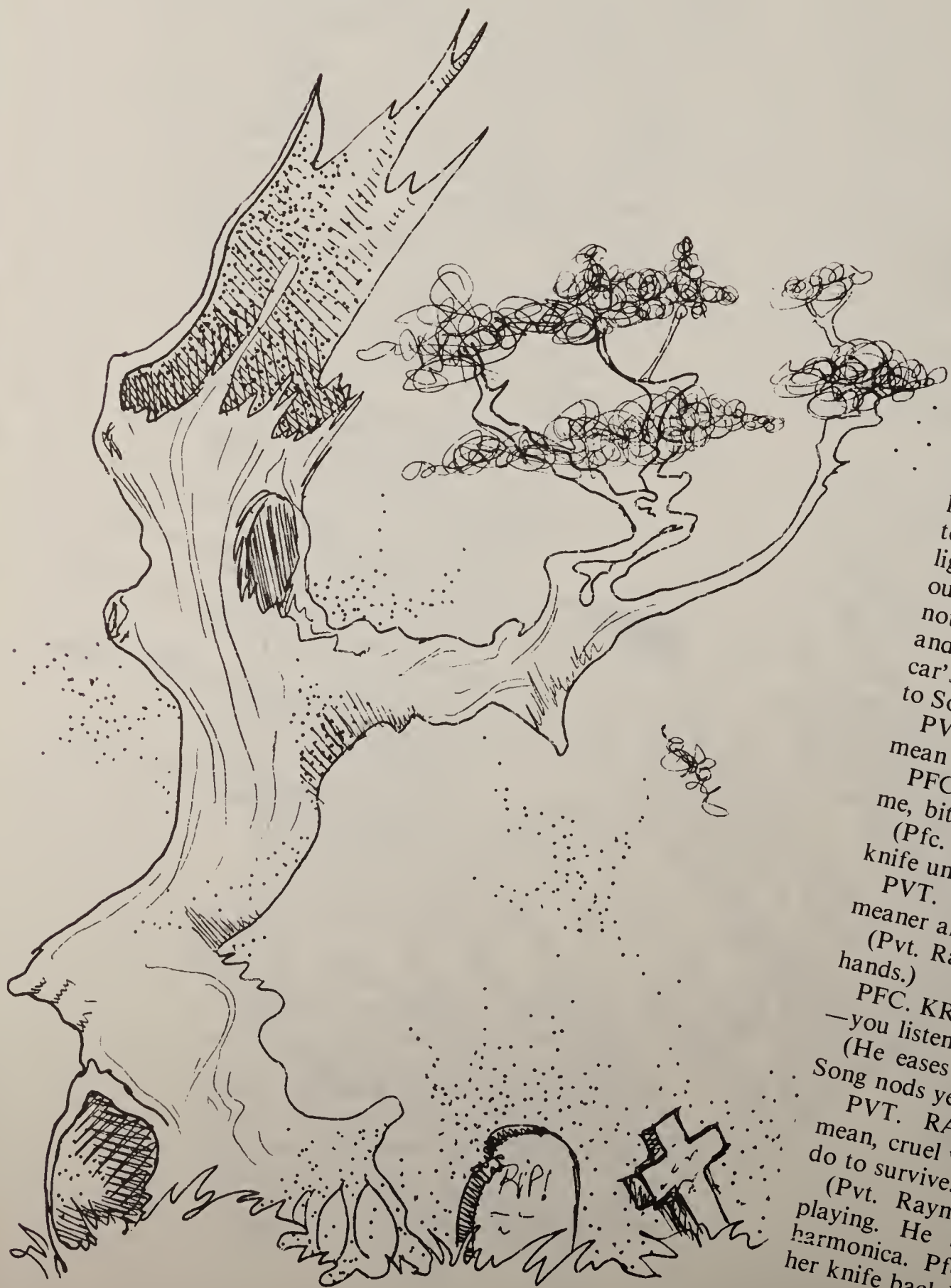
PVT. RAYMOND: How long you been in Nam?

PFC. KRAMER: Four days.

PVT. RAYMOND: Wrote home yet?

PFC. KRAMER: No.

PVT. RAYMOND: Do it soon.



(He hobbles over and picks up his crutch. He begins walking toward Song with his hand out. She makes two short knife thrusts at him, then seeing that he won't back up, she gives him the knife and sits.)

PFC. KRAMER: You knew she wouldn't, didn't you?

PVT. RAYMOND: Uh, uh.

(He gives the knife to Pfc. Kramer.)

PFC. KRAMER: Then you must be tired of living?

PVT. RAYMOND: Kramer—Pete, I'm jus' tired of running.

(Pvt. Raymond sits down, takes a harmonica from his pocket, and begins to blow slightly off key blues riffs. The lights dim and the red revolving light outside the hooch becomes more noticeable. It strikes against the walls and across Song's face like a police car's flasher might. Pfc. Kramer walks to Song with the knife in his hand.)

PVT. RAYMOND: (Sings) It's a mean cruel world, young blood...

PFC. KRAMER: You tried to cut me, bitch!

(Pfc. Kramer places the tip of the knife under Song's chin.)

PVT. RAYMOND: ...And it gets meaner all the time.

(Pvt. Raymond laughs and claps his hands.)

PFC. KRAMER: I ain't your enemy —you listening?

(He eases back with the knife and Song nods yes.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Yes-s, it's a mean, cruel world... gotta do what ya do to survive. (Laughs)

(Pvt. Raymond stops singing and playing. He bangs spit out of the harmonica. Pfc. Kramer offers Song her knife back.)

PFC. KRAMER: Take it. (She hesitates.) Take the fucker! (She takes it.) Don't pull it on me again—else you'll be shittin' steel.
(Song puts the knife inside her handbag.)

PVT. RAYMOND: How you like my blues?

PFC. KRAMER: They suck.
(Corp. Alphabet enters the scene carrying Pvt. Raymond's duffle bag.)

CORP. ALPHABET: (Shouts) Are you people deaf?

PVT. RAYMOND: Sorry, ol' buddy.

(Corp. Alphabet dumps Pvt. Raymond's duffle bag into his lap.)

CORP. ALPHABET: I'm not your buddy, Raymond.

(He looks around at the broken furniture and utensils and whistles low.)

CORP. ALPHABET: What do you call this?

PVT. RAYMOND: (Waits a beat.) Spring cleaning.

(Song bursts into laughter and Pfc. Kramer coughs, trying not to.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Always a wise ass, huh, fuck up?

(Corp. Alphabet bumps into Pvt. Raymond's bandaged foot and Pvt. Raymond winces in pain.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Sorry, ol' buddy. Now what happened?

PFC. KRAMER: Charlie hit Bravo Company last night.

CORP. ALPHABET: You saw it?

PFC. KRAMER: She told me.

CORP. ALPHABET: Yeah? Then you don't know shit from shine 'o' la. Who are you?

(Pvt. Raymond dumps his duffle bag and stands.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Aw, where's my manners? Corp. Alphabet, this here...

CORP. ALPHABET: It's Zwierchowski! Karl Z-w-i-e-r-chowski—got it?

PVT. RAYMOND: S'fine by me, Alphabet. Meet Kramer—Pete, Pfc.

(They shake hands. Pvt. Raymond sits down and takes out his harmonica.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Where's home?

PFC. KRAMER: South Philly.

CORP. ALPHABET: Hey, I live in Jersey.

PFC. KRAMER: I used to stay in East Orange.

CORP. ALPHABET: Small world... who's your friend?

PFC. KRAMER: Her name's Song.

CORP. ALPHABET: Yeah? Laughing girl... come here.

(Pvt. Raymond blows a couple quick blues riffs.)

SONG: (Stands) I do nothin' here.

CORP. ALPHABET: So—come here.

(Song walks to Pfc. Kramer and uses him as a shield.)

CORP. ALPHABET: You here last night?

(She shrugs. Pvt. Raymond blows a wailing blues riff.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Turn it off, Raymond.

PVT. RAYMOND: Nobody likes my blues.

CORP. ALPHABET: Where you from?

(Song shrugs once more. Pvt. Raymond blows softly into his harmonica.

Corp. Alphabet pulls out his forty-five.)

PFC. KRAMER: What's this?

CORP. ALPHABET: War... now get the fuck back.

(Pfc. Kramer doesn't move.)

CORP. ALPHABET: I'm talking to you, Pfc!

(Pfc. Kramer pulls away from a clinging Song. He stands next to Pvt. Raymond who is banging spit from his harmonica.)

CORP. ALPHABET: On your knees, gook.

(Song doesn't move. She holds her hands in prayer. Corp. Alphabet places his forty-five at her head and cocks it.

She gets on her knees and the red revolving light flashes across her face.)

PFC. KRAMER: Do something, Raymond.

(Pvt. Raymond blows an off key blues riff. Pfc. Kramer collars him and lifts him from his chair.)

PFC. KRAMER: Goddamn, you! Do something!

PVT. RAYMOND: You're scaring Kramer—Pete, Alphabet.

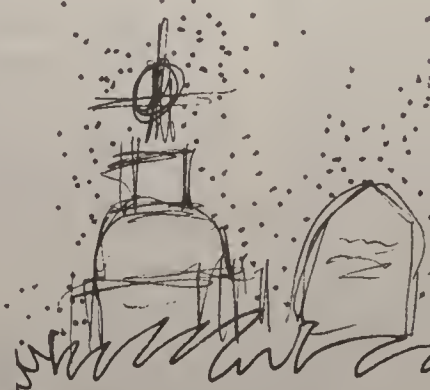
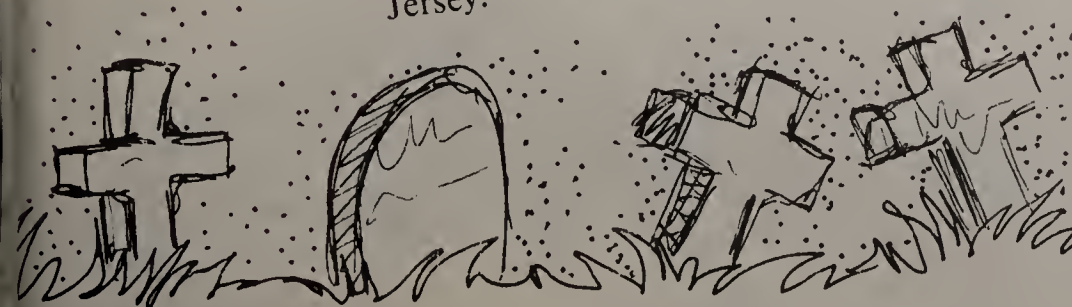
CORP. ALPHABET: First taste of combat, Kramer?

PFC. KRAMER: Combat? This is fuckin' murder!

CORP. ALPHABET: Killing V.C. isn't murder, soldier.

PFC. KRAMER: She ain't V.C. 3 of that, too? Hey, Raymond.

PVT. RAYMOND: Yea?



CORP. ALPHABET: Remember how we test 'em to see if they're V.C.?
PVT. RAYMOND: Sure.
(Pvt. Raymond rolls himself a smoke.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Tell Kramer. Well—see, North Vietnamese have hair under their arm. So what you do is kill anyone you think is North Vietnamese, then lift their arm to check.

(Song begins to rock back and forth and moan.)

CORP. ALPHABET: What do you think, Pfc?

(Pvt. Raymond lights his cigarette and begins smoking.)

PFC. KRAMER: That's sick, Zwierchowski.

CORP. ALPHABET: Yeah! Well I haven't killed nothing but V.C. since I been testing.

(Pfc. Kramer walks to Song, bends down, and gives her a handkerchief. She blows her nose.)

PFC. KRAMER: Look at her... she's a kid.

CORP. ALPHABET: Get away from her. I'm gonna ask this gook bitch some questions...and if I don't get the right answers...in sixty seconds she's gonna be a minute ghost.

(Pfc. Kramer rises and snaps his fingers.)

PFC. KRAMER: Just like that?

(Corp. Alphabet snaps his fingers.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Just like that.

PFC. KRAMER: And who the fuck are you—God?

PVT. RAYMOND: S-shit. That there's John Wayne, young blood.

CORP. ALPHABET: Kiss off, Raymond.

(Pvt. Raymond joins Pfc. Kramer at Song's side.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Can you hear me, cunt? (No response. He yells.) Can you hear me now? (Song nods yes.) Good. Tell me what happened to Bravo Company.

SONG: (Voice wavers.) V.C. bomb.

CORP. ALPHABET: How many were killed?

SONG: I no kno'.

CORP. ALPHABET: (Louder) How many were hurt?

SONG: (Sobs) I no kno'.

CORP. ALPHABET: (Kicks her.) You're a liar!

(Song holds her stomach and rocks back and forth.)

SONG: (Crying) I no lie! I no lie! I no lie!

PFC. KRAMER: Zwierchowski, leave her alone!

(Pfc. Kramer tries to get to Corp. Alphabet but Pvt. Raymond stops him.)

CORP. ALPHABET: You're soft, Kramer! A kid like that blew up a platoon not long ago.

PVT. RAYMOND: Don't platoons blow up kids, Alphabet?

CORP. ALPHABET: Meaning?

PVT. RAYMOND: It's war...now get the fuck back.

(He flicks his cigarette into Corp. Alphabet's chest.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Wrote home yet, Raymond?

(He raises the forty-five at Pvt. Raymond, but before he can aim and fire Song grabs the weapon and it goes off. The bullet knocks out a light and a struggle begins. Pvt. Raymonds winds up with the weapon.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Everybody relax.

(He walks to a chair and sits down while holding the others at bay.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Your ass is dead, Raymond.

PVT. RAYMOND: Well here it is Alphabet. Come on and carry it away.

PFC. KRAMER: You got no place to hide. They'll get you.

PVT. RAYMOND: So who's running?

SONG: Johnny, what you do now?

PVT. RAYMOND: Wait.

CORP. ALPHABET: For what?

PVT. RAYMOND: Miller.

CORP. ALPHABET: You got a screw loose. Didn't you hear? V.C. are out there.

PVT. RAYMOND: I heard...heard you call her a liar. You believed her all the time and was gonna blow her away for nothing. Take a good look at the real enemy, Kramer—Pete. He's what this war is all about—hard ons and thrills.

(He takes out his harmonica and blows some slow off key blues.)

PFC. KRAMER: What makes you think he's gonna show?

PVT. RAYMOND: Song is his favorite piece. I knew when I saw her that if he wasn't already here... he was coming. Fire fights turn him on.

CORP. ALPHABET: You're ill, Raymond.

PVT. RAYMOND: I'm working on it.

(Pvt. Raymond plays a bar of blues, then bangs the spit out of his harmonica. The others sit on the floor and watch him.)

PVT. RAYMOND: You like music, Kramer—Pete?

PFC. KRAMER: Some.

PVT. RAYMOND: How do the blues grab you?

PFC. KRAMER: They don't.

PVT. RAYMOND: They will.

SONG: Johnny, I have go pee.

(She gets up.)

PVT. RAYMOND: In the corner.

SONG: I go toilet.

(He shakes his head no and points to a corner. She goes and urinates.)

CORP. ALPHABET: It could get messy in here, Raymond.

PVT. RAYMOND: Nothing you ain't ever stepped in. Hey, young blood.

PFC. KRAMER: Yeah?

PVT. RAYMOND: You ever walked in a rice patty?

PFC. KRAMER: Never.

PVT. RAYMOND: (Snickers) It's full of shit...like Alphabet here.

CORP. ALPHABET: Tell me... whatcha gonna do if Miller shows?

PVT. RAYMOND: Depends.

CORP. ALPHABET: On what?

PVT. RAYMOND: Whether or not he's carrying an arm full of goodies. If he's not I'll wave... maybe blow him a kiss. But if he's loaded down with supplies to trade for nookie... I'm gonna burn the fucker.

CORP. ALPHABET: What's it to you?

PVT. RAYMOND: (Holds up the harmonica.) He helped kill the dude that owned this spit organ.

(He begins to blow softly into the harmonica.)

PVT. RAYMOND: (Stops playing.) I can't get it right.

PFC. KRAMER: It takes time.

CORP. ALPHABET: It takes rhythm. You're the wrong shade, Raymond.

PFC. KRAMER: That's cow dung, Zwierchowski.

PVT. RAYMOND: Ol' T.J. used to say something similar. But he talked 'bout experience. "Raymond you're a hip white boy but before you can play the blues...you have to live the blues like us." (He blows a wailing blues riff.) Remember Thomas Jackson, Song?

SONG: For sure. Number one thousand soul brother...always boo coo horny wit' tee tee money.

PVT. RAYMOND: (Laughs) That was T.J. He and the other brothers had a soul orchestra made up of these things. When another brother got dusted by Charlie...they'd play some boss blues over him. They said they din't want no funky, pale taps played over their dead black ass. (He blows a soft bar of blues.)

CORP. ALPHABET: What's all this got to do with Sergeant Miller?

PVT. RAYMOND: Jackson worked in supply. Miller was his N.C.O. One night he caught Miller pilfering supplies. The usuals...penicillin, needles, clothing, etc. He didn't say anything...what he did was follow Miller off the unit. Miller met Song and another girl named Cambodian Lee...they had an orgy under the stars. He traded supplies for nookie. The next day T.J. told Miller to cool it 'cause Charlie was probably getting stuff meant for our guys.

(Pvt. Raymond plays a funky blues riff.)

PFC. KRAMER: What did Miller say?

PVT. RAYMOND: Ol' sarge told him to go fuck himself. He kept on pilfering. Finally T.J. went to Capt. Warren. When Miller was confronted he claimed it was T.J. who was pilfering. Miller is white...T.J. was black...guess who they believed?

CORP. ALPHABET: What did they do to him?

PVT. RAYMOND: He was a Pfc.—they busted him.

CORP. ALPHABET: He got off light.

PVT. RAYMOND: They put him in a damp cell in Phu Bien. They told him if he signed a paper saying he had lied they'd give him his stripe back...so he did. (He blows a wailing blues riff.)

PFC. KRAMER: Did they?

PVT. RAYMOND: (Snickers) *Them* lifers? Hell... they kept him locked up. T.J. was dangerous... he had principles. And there was Miller... free to pilfer and bus' a nut. My cell was across from T.J.'s. We used to rap sometimes. He'd call out... "Hey, white boy, how's things in Georgia?" And I'd yell... "S'fine, colored boy, 'cept since y'all left we have to eat all them watermelons ourselves!" His mother sent him a news clipping... said he was a collaborator. He lost his woman. His family stopped writing. And early one morning he hung himself. He left me his spit organ.

(Pvt. Raymond blows a wailing blues riff.)

CORP. ALPHABET: What he do that for?

PVT. RAYMOND: If I told you, you still wouldn't get it, Alphabet.

PFC. KRAMER: How do you know T.J. wasn't lyin'?

CORP. ALPHABET: He don't.

PVT. RAYMOND: He had principles... I trusted him. To come out of here alive you have to know who you can trust.

CORP. ALPHABET: Miller isn't coming. Why would he risk his ass for pussy?

PVT. RAYMOND: To relieve his hard on.

PFC. KRAMER: Song saved your life... you trust her?

PVT. RAYMOND: Do you?

PFC. KRAMER: Yeah? Why not?

(Pvt. Raymond stands and cocks the forty-five.)

PVT. RAYMOND: You're thinking with your peter. Get up, Song... give Kramer—Pete what you stole.

SONG: (Stands) I no steal nothin', Johnny.

PVT. RAYMOND: Then I guess you're gonna die for nothing.

(Song goes inside her handbag, takes out the stolen items, and drops them into Pfc. Kramer's lap.)

PFC. KRAMER: Aw, shit!

PVT. RAYMOND: Live and learn, Kramer—Pete.

CORP. ALPHABET: She's a whore... Miller's a top sergeant.

(Pvt. Raymond walks to the rear door and looks out of the port hole.)

PVT. RAYMOND: You trust Miller?

CORP. ALPHABET: I trust him.

PVT. RAYMOND: With your life?

(Corp. Alphabet doesn't answer.)

PVT. RAYMOND: I'm waiting, Alphabet.

CORP. ALPHABET: Miller's tough. I trust him with my life.

(Corp. Alphabet gets up.)
CORP. ALPHABET: Hold on, Raymond.

PVT. RAYMOND: *You* hold on. (Corp. Alphabet begins to walk toward Pvt. Raymond.) That's close enough. Kramer—Pete... (He gets up.) Pull yella mama to her feet and place your hand over her mouth. (He does.)

CORP. ALPHABET: Suppose Miller doesn't show?

PVT. RAYMOND: Then I'll give you the honor of blowing my fucking brains out. Now... (He steps back and puts a finger to his lips.)

(They stand there waiting. There is the sound of movement out back and a voice speaking softly is heard.)

SGT. MILLER: Song?

(Sgt. Miller backs into the scene carrying a box of supplies.)

PVT. RAYMOND: I been waitin' fo you, G.I.

SGT. MILLER: Thought you were in Phu Bien.

PVT. RAYMOND: I was... set 'em down, Miller.

(Sgt. Miller puts the supplies on the floor.)

PFC. KRAMER: (Turns Song loose.) Want me to check the box, Raymond?

PVT. RAYMOND: Let Alphabet do it... it's his ass.

(Corp. Alphabet doesn't move.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Go ahead... you trust him... take a look.

(Corp. Alphabet begins to look through the supplies.)

PVT. RAYMOND: What do you see?

CORP. ALPHABET: (Rises) Just what you said. Miller, you son of a bitch!

(Corp. Alphabet lunges at Sgt. Miller and Pfc. Kramer separates them.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Get on your knees, Miller.

SGT. MILLER: You looney? I don't take orders from you.

(Pvt. Raymond knocks Sgt. Miller to his knees.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Get down with him, Alphabet.

CORP. ALPHABET: I was joking before. Can't you take a joke?

PVT. RAYMOND: Am I grinning?

(Corp. Alphabet kneels next to Sgt. Miller.)

SGT. MILLER: I'll bust your red neck ass, Raymond.

PVT. RAYMOND: Too late... I'm already busted. Sa-ay, why don't y'all sing somethin' upliftin' like a good ol' negro spiritual? Who knows, Miller, maybe T.J. is listen'.

SGT. MILLER: Fuck you!
(Pvt. Raymond kicks Sgt. Miller using his bandaged foot. He winces.)
PVT. RAYMOND: How 'bout Swing Low, Sweet Chariot? C'mon...
(A reluctant Sgt. Miller and Corp. Alphabet sing as Pvt. Raymond blows the harmonica. "Swing Low, Sweet Chariot coming for to carry me home... Swing Low, Sweet Chariot coming for to carry me...")
(Song opens her handbag, takes out her knife, and stabs Pvt. Raymond in the back. She runs out of the hooch. Pvt. Raymond slumps.)
PFC. KRAMER: Raymond!
PVT. RAYMOND: Take the gun, young blood.
(Pfc. Kramer catches Pvt. Raymond. Miller and Alphabet begin to rise.)
PFC. KRAMER: S'my fault... sorry, Ray...
PVT. RAYMOND: Take the Goddamn gun!
(Pfc. Kramer takes the gun and points Miller and Alphabet back down.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Kramer—Pete, I was wailing. (Coughs) Do me and T.J. a favor.

PFC. KRAMER: Name it.

(Pvt. Raymond gives the harmonica to Pfc. Kramer.)

PVT. RAYMOND: Blow them hard on mother fuckers away.

(Pfc. Kramer is kneeling with Pvt. Raymond in his arms. Pvt. Raymond slumps and dies. Pfc. Kramer shakes Pvt. Raymond and calls his name twice. Sgt. Miller and Corp. Alphabet begin to rise and are pointed back down by Pfc. Kramer using the forty-five.)

SGT. MILLER: What's with you, soldier?

CORP. ALPHABET: You don't owe him anything, Pfc!

PFC. KRAMER: Call me Pete. (He stands and cocks the forty-five.) Now start singing.

(Pfc. Kramer blows a note on the harmonica. The lights dim lower and the red flashing light strikes across the faces of Sgt. Miller and Corp. Alphabet.)

FADE OUT



The World's Need

We keep waiting for word
that the great need of the world
has been met, and the boundless power
of the sun has been captured
in a crucible. We keep waiting.

While we wait,
fortunes are made and lost
in oil and coal,
and the sun continues to shine
on saint and sinner,
most of its energy wasted.

But the heat of the sun
will continue to waste
and humanity's gain
proceeds at snail's pace
till one day we turn on the switch
to the integrated, promulgated, corroborated tokomak
and the world will no longer be enslaved
to today's energy barons—
new ones will succeed them.

Henry P. White

Award of Merit—Poetry

Tapestry

The heat comes,
staggering in ragged waves
and pounding the soft recesses
of the night,
is sounded
by the steady cricket whirr
and pictured
in a fireflied field
that flickers
silver messages
on velvet black,
the tapestry
of an August night.

Linda Knight Preston

4th Place Poetry Award

Sensations

We tore out the flickering bellies of the lightning bugs and wore them as luminous rings. Perhaps in retaliation, the mosquitoes buzzed incessant static in our ears and branded us with swollen, scratchy welts that could not be quelled. During those long days and short nights, the sun gifted us with balloon lips and peeling, parchment skin. Sticking to sweat-soaked sheets, we welcomed the slight breeze that skipped quickly through the attic. We hurled ourselves at white-capped waves and poked at the sand encrusted between our toes. When the summer sun finally cooled, we stuffed our chalky, shoe-polished sandals in a box on the highest shelf in the closet, and we waited. . .

Linda M. Zelencik

This Hour to Hawks Belongs

Hear the doves call across the field;
Clouds sweep across the sky.
Leaves pinioned like flags rustle.
Rocks etched by a shadow's movement.
A hawk sweeps above; hunger burns
In its hollow bones. It pauses
And folds its wings to drop
And strike its prey.
Blood on the clover.
The clouds move on.
Wings on the wind arise.
High above the purple blooms
Waits its mate.
This hour to hawks belongs.

Peggy Kennedy



Valleys

*Though the better part of a decade passes,
the mortar thud of a boy's ball against the house
is again the harbinger of incoming fire
and awakens me in the jungle grass,
grey Asian rain sky there, instead of ceiling white.
I bury my face in the shag fiber,
heavy smell of rotting vegetation,
and I'm there again—
all over and over again—
and again the round explodes!
The screams are mine, yet no—
and I think the hell is over,
blood dripping from the trees out front.
It's the day we found Emory in pieces
and put what we could in the body bag
near the mailbox at the curb.*

*Northbound on the toll road,
the outbound 737 from O'Hare
causes the moving car to shudder,
as I shuddered, often
as a downbound F-4, the phantom,
obliterated targets from coordinates radioed
on a Delco push button deluxe
still squawking at me from behind the wheel of my APC,
phantoms everywhere now,
calling the choppers for the wounded there on the highway,
Phu Bai this exit, food and lodging,
honor and pride returning momentarily until
the faded peace sign,
warping with the billboard
on the jungle trail.*

Richard Terpstra

Modern Day Cinderella

The evening of July 16 was a night that Frank Hardin will never forget. He met the woman he eventually would marry at a masquerade ball. With the help of a friend, he received an invitation to attend this event. That friend was Frank's fairy godmother.

On the afternoon of July 16, Frank was driving home from work with his friend and fellow worker Willie Jones. Frank started talking to Willie about having taken his nieces to see the Disney film 'Cinderella' the night before. He enjoyed the movie, but complained that his nieces wouldn't keep quiet.

Unknown to Frank, his fairy godmother overheard his conversation. Well, she didn't hear everything quite right. As a matter of fact, she couldn't tell whether a man or a woman was speaking. She was almost completely blind and deaf and needed the help of a sensory ball as her eyes and ears. However, she was not prone to using her sensory ball, for she did not wish to admit her age, which was 300. The only word of the conversation which she heard clearly was 'Cinderella.' For over two centuries, she had wanted another Cinderella, and now she saw her chance to attain that wish.

She ordered her sensory ball to follow Frank and to let her know when 'she' was at home alone. Even though the sensory ball knew better, it did not tell the fairy godmother; it merely followed her orders. When Frank arrived at home, the sensory ball told the fairy godmother, "She's home, madam."

"She's home? Good. I'll visit her."

At once, the fairy godmother transported herself into Frank's bathroom. When she made her sudden appearance, Frank quickly zipped his pants and yelled, "Where did you come from?"

"I am your fairy godmother. I have come to help you, Cinderella," she announced.

"But—"

"No buts, my dear, I have a wonderful surprise for you. Tonight, the Prince of Norway and his sister, the Princess, will throw a gala masquerade ball in order to stop the slaughter of baby seals. You'll need an invitation in order to get in." The fairy godmother waved her magic wand, and suddenly Frank had an invitation in his hand. Then the fairy godmother said, "Since this is a formal event, you will also need an evening gown. To complete your wardrobe, you will need a mask." With another wave of her magic wand, the fairy godmother transformed Frank from an ordinary-looking young man into a drag queen with exquisite taste in clothing. Frank was wearing a light blue evening gown so attractive that it put even the best store-bought dresses to shame.

"Oh—I almost forgot. You'll need a pair of shoes to match that dress," added the fairy godmother. With a third wave of the wand, Frank was wearing a pair of blue high heeled shoes which almost made him lose his balance a few times.

"Now take a look at yourself in the mirror."

Frank did as he was told. When he saw the work of the fairy godmother, he muttered, "Christ, I look like the Lone Ranger in drag."

"Is there anything else you would like to wear, Cinderella?"

"How about a wig?" asked Frank.

"Certainly, if that would make you look any better."

"I think it would."

The fairy godmother waved her wand one last time and gave Frank a blonde wig. Then she said, "I've arranged for a limousine to pick you up at seven-thirty. Go and have a good time, but be home by midnight, for my magic spell will wear off at that time. Goodbye, Cinderella."

"Thanks a lot," said Frank, sounding sincere. Then the fairy godmother vanished.

Frank then said to himself, "In this get-up, I'll be home by nine o'clock." He looked at himself in the mirror again and decided that he didn't look so bad after all. His confidence didn't last long. Apprehension set in. "Tonight I am entering high society in drag," he said. "What if I am found out? What if some guy makes a pass at me? What am I going to do?" Eventually, he chose not to worry about the masquerade ball. "What the hell," he said. "I'm not going to worry about what anyone else thinks. I'm going!"

At seven-thirty, the limousine arrived. Frank, unaccustomed to wearing high heels, walked slowly to the car. The chauffeur came out and opened the door for him. When he reached the door, Frank recognized the chauffeur and exclaimed, "Willie! When did you start moonlighting as a chauffeur?"

"I'm not a chauffeur. Some fairy godmother chick came to my house and zapped me with a magic wand and made me a chauffeur. And when did you become the queen of the night?"

"A couple of hours ago, when the fairy godmother decided that I was Cinderella."

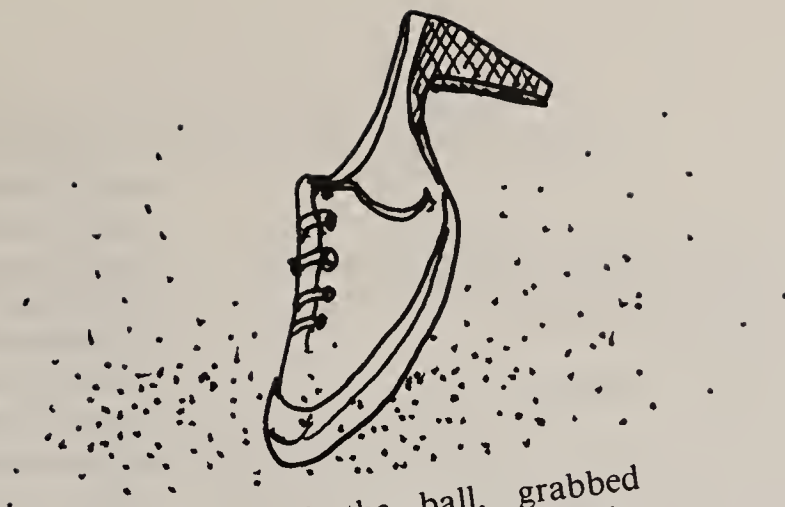
"You? Cinderella? Hardly."

"Shut up and drive, Willie."

On the way to the ball, Frank made Willie swear to secrecy about the evening. Willie responded, "Are you kidding, man? If I started talking about fairy godmothers visiting us, we'd both wind up in the looney bin."

Soon, they arrived at the ball. As he let Frank out of the car, Willie said, "Good luck, man."

"Thanks. I'll need it."



Frank entered the ball, grabbed some food, and kept to himself, for he did not know what to say to anyone. He was in a room full of strangers. After about an hour, a handsome young man came to him and asked, "What's the problem, miss? You have been keeping to yourself all evening. Don't you like to dance?"

"That's not the problem. I don't know anyone here."

"Allow me to introduce myself, miss. I am Prince Olaf of Norway. Over there is my sister, Princess Sonja."

"I am pleased to meet you, Prince Olaf. My name is Frances Hardin." The band started playing a song. As they did, Prince Olaf extended his hand and asked, "Frances, would you like to dance?"

"I'd be delighted."

They danced, but Frank felt awkward. The prince told Frank to relax. Frank excused himself for his awkwardness by saying that he was not a very good dancer. Frank was grateful when the dance ended. He thanked the prince for the dance and tried to become invisible. However, Prince Olaf said, "Frances, come with me. I'd like for you to meet my sister."

The prince led Frank to the princess and said, "Frances, this is my sister, Princess Sonja."

"It is a pleasure to meet you, Frances."

"I am pleased to meet you, too."

"When you were dancing with my brother, I could not help but admire your looks. Tell me, where did you get that evening gown?"

Frank thought fast and answered, "I bought it at Saks' Fifth Avenue."

"It is lovely. Who did your hair?"

"I did my own."

"Did you come with a gentleman?"

"Oh no, I came alone."

"That is a pity, such a lovely girl all by yourself."

"That is no problem for me."

For Frank, this conversation was too long. Besides, he was not a good liar. Fortunately for him, a young man approached the princess and asked her for a dance. She accepted, and the princess bid farewell to Frank.

However, the party did not end for Frank at that time. Several other men asked him to dance. Between dances, some of the ladies started talking to him. The more he talked and danced, the more Frank felt at ease. He felt so at ease that he paid no attention to the time. When he did check the time, it was seconds before midnight.

Quickly, Frank left the ballroom and headed for his limousine. He nearly lost his balance because he was not used to wearing high-heeled shoes. He stopped, took one shoe off, but before he could remove the other one, Frank Hardin was no longer Cinderella. He was wearing blue jeans, tennis shoes, and a 'No Nukes' t-shirt. When Frank reached the limousine, Willie quickly let him into the car. Before they could drive away, however, Frank found himself sitting in the back of Willie's pick-up truck.

"I see the fairy godmother changed your pick-up into a limo for the evening, Willie," said Frank.

"For the evening? Just for the evening?" Willie screamed. "I thought it was mine to keep."

"No, all of this stuff carried a limited guarantee which expired at midnight."

"That fairy godmother is a cheap old bag"

"Willie, stop complaining and start driving."

On the way to work the next day, neither Frank nor Willie mentioned the incidents of the night before, but the subject was not a dead issue. When they arrived at work, the Prince and Princess of Norway were there. Prince Olaf was holding the blue shoe that Frank had taken off in his hurry to leave.

The prince said, "A young lady lost this shoe at a masquerade ball last night. I may not find the owner of this shoe here, but I must take that chance. You see, I want to marry this lady."

Upon hearing those words, Frank turned pale. He knew that he had to stop the prince, no matter how much embarrassment it would cause him. When the prince asked all the ladies to line up to try on the shoe, Frank sneaked into the line. He put his index finger to his lips and requested that the girls remain quiet. Some of them giggled, but they covered their mouths when they did. Prince Olaf sat down and tried the shoe on girl after girl. When Frank appeared at the front of the line, his boss started laughing out loud. The prince paid no attention as he put the shoe on Frank. Then the boss yelled out, "Hey, Hardin, what have you been hiding from us?"

The prince then looked up and saw Frank. In that instant, Frank changed into the person he had played the night before.

"You?" exclaimed Prince Olaf.

"I'm afraid so," said Frank. "I had to stop you from making a futile search"

"That is very noble of you," said Princess Sonja. "For your honesty, sir, I offer to you my hand in marriage."

"I accept. By the way, my name is Frank Hardin."

"Let us go now, Frank. We must do something about your taste in clothes"

"I agree"

Several months later, Frank Hardin and Princess Sonja exchanged vows in a wedding attended by all of the Norwegian royalty. Willie Jones was there, too, acting as the best man. The fairy godmother had her new Cinderella, Frank had Sonja, and everyone lived happily ever after.

Pat Mills

College School

*Your mother lied to you. She told you you were cool;
Then she dressed you up and sent you off to college school.
College School! College School!*

*You don't know what you want to be. You don't know why you go.
You'll probably end up washin' cars for all the friends you know
at College School! College School!*

*You may be college girl, you may be college boy.
When you graduate you join the ranks of unemployed
from College School! College School!*

*You stroll into the classroom, sit down with your books.
You don't care 'bout your grade—just 'bout how you look
at College School! College School!*

*You go to college school to earn a good degree.
It won't get you anywhere, just you wait and see.
Yeah, College School! College School!*

*I went there for a while, but I did too much dope.
I hope to become famous for this stupid song I wrote
about College School! College School!*

*They teach you about algebra, and stuff you'll never use.
After class you're doing dope and drinking all the booze
at College School! College School!*

*College School can be fun, or it can be a drag.
It can be fun if you don't work, and Dad's a "money bags"
College School! College School!*

*Fraternities, Sororities, made up of a bunch of fools,
But they think they're cool going to a college school.
College School! College School!*

Richard Johnson

Haiku

*Life is like running
'round a bush while jumping
in and jumping out.*

Ilene Haluska



The Dragon and George

*In thunder and blood, splattered with mud,
the knight charged into the flame;
bent over his steed, he did not heed
the danger which burned his name.*

*“George!” it crackled, in a voice smoke-shackled
and thick with sulphurous fumes;
“George!” it hissed, through a crimson mist,
“Now our battle resumes!”*

*Up through the ash, with clatter and crash,
and streaked with brimstone and sweat,
in apparent desire to burn on the pyre,
the youth returned the threat.*

*“Poisonous thing! Your lizard wing
beats the acid air;
it can neither affright nor infect my sight
with its impotent, evil flare!”*

*Galloping in to the raging din
that flashed and clapped and blew,
he lifted his sword while the leviathan roared,
and slashed its visage in two.*

*Bellowing pain and flailing the rain,
twisting and clawing the clouds,
it lurched for the knight with agonized might
and purpose that darkness enshrouds.*

*Swift and adept, George swerved and swept
away from the vengeful claw,
shot out of the clutch of the demon touch,
beyond the venomous jaw.*

*Racing away from the boiling fray,
he mounted the top of a hill,
and struggled to find in his heated mind
the choice to be killed or kill.*

*With shudder and tear, he pictured his bier
and his body battered and seared;
the requiem’s toll deep in his soul
arose from the death that he feared.*

*He stared below at his writhing foe
gasping and pulling at dust,
then he buried within a sense of sin,
and braced to do what he must.*

*He turned his horse toward the battle course
and grimly descended the hill,
picking his way through bones and clay,
till a sudden sight froze him still.*

*Across the clearing and far out of hearing,
unconscious and chained to a stake,
was a peerless maid tied in the shade
of the monster, for vengeance’ sake.*

*Kidnapped, confined and weakened in mind,
the girl had endured too long
cold, starvation, stern privation,
for a deed the monster deemed wrong.*

*Her father had been in the dragon’s den
and had harmed the evil one’s young;
a sword through the eye, and left it to die—
this account was on every tongue.*

*To this thick pollution, in crazed retribution,
the maiden was carried away,
and the contest ensued, with hatred imbued,
for many a night and day.*

*Pausing now on the hill’s furrowed brow,
George pondered this sad history,
when a scaled surprise disturbed his eyes
with its reptilian mystery.*

*Crawling slowly, sly and unholy,
the beast approached the poor child;
it stopped close by and began to untie
the bonds of the Wicked and Wild.*

*George watched in fright the incredible sight
as the beast softly lowered the maid
with gentle paw and retracted claw—
surely an evil charade.*

*But it left her unbound and turned around,
lifting its head to the light,
and then George saw, clotted and raw,
the wound which would bring death’s night.*

*He had cleaved the skull; one eye was dull;
the other had split from his blow.
Its giant frame quivered, convulsed and shivered;
it would soon become food for the crow.*

*It raised its face to George’s place,
where he thought it were certain madness—
in the beast’s expression—a distinct impression—
he began to think he saw sadness.*

*Something that said there was nought to dread,
that a common fear made them one,
that it seemed a shame to barter the blame
when to one Father they were each son.*

*With one eye left, of vision bereft,
it seemed to see more than it cared to;
its half-face, though dumb and woodenly numb,
spoke somehow more than George dared to.*

*An end to the fight, a stop to this blight;
it mutely made its appeal.
Merely to crave, blood to save,
rather than hurt, to heal.*

*Unnatural thought, in battle wrought,
that monsters should speak of reason;
George argued away the light of the day,
told himself his mind did him treason.*

*This beast of the night, of evil and fright,
cannot feel what man's heart has stored,
and it has been said, for the severed head
the maid's father has offered reward.*

*He leveled his spear, and, quitted by fear,
to the smoky depths he plunged;
in purposeful stride, found the blinded side,
and at the heart he lunged.*

*There was no roar, as once before,
but rather a rumbling groan.
From the cavern inside the scaly hide,
the death-call of muscle and bone.*

*No cursing, no shriek. But, too hurt and too weak,
it dropped and bled on the spot;
its lifestream flowed, and but dimly glowed;
all was cold that once had been hot.*

*Unmoving and still, empty of will,
it lay, like a mountain of black.
George drew his sword with a thought to reward,
and started to climb its back.*

*But he had to pass by the dying eye,
which seemed to know what he'd do,
so he hid the frame with something like shame,
till beyond the monster's view.*

*The valiant knight had won the fight,
but he puzzled at the cost;
he knew what he'd won, but not what he'd done,
and not what he had lost.*

*Rewarded with wealth, he lived in good health
till his appointed hour came.
He was settled and old, and somewhat less bold,
when death called out his name.*

*"George!" it sounded, with dread unbounded,
"George! Your name I sing!"
The voice had a power from this judgment hour
and, he thought, a familiar ring.*

*He felt himself drain of time and pain
and float apart from his world;
something inside unfolded wide
and reached out like a flag unfurled.*

*There was comfort and peace, and a sense of release,
but not all that George had expected;
though he felt happily buoyed, it was in a void,
not in a Presence that loved and protected.*

*"Where am I?" he thought. "What has my life brought?
What existence so drained of elation,
in a place so vast there seems nothing to last
but an endless sense of frustration?"*

*Afloat in what seemed a sea in a dream,
he searched for another so fated;
he noticed a form, as though in a storm,
by vague shadows undulated.*

*The nearer it came, the louder his name
called by this undefined ghost;
"Goerge!" it hissed, through the Plutonian mist;
"Welcome to heaven's coast!"*

*It couldn't be, yet plain to see
was the dragon, the beast of the night.
It had waited there, in its ethereal lair,
from the day of their last bloody fight.*

*"I imagine you wonder what spell you're under,
and do we call this place bright or nether?
And, George, for you, the question of rue:
how did we end up together?"*

*George dumbly assented and somewhat relented
his initial fear and dread,
and listened well to the words that fell
into his spinning head.*

*"This is a place of postponed grace,
of second chances and goals;
here we meet and will somehow repeat
our living in different roles.*

*"We must do it again, my forlorn friend;
we must live another life,
endure a returning to dueling and burning,
a repeat of anger and strife.*

*"I see in your eye you would question why;
I'd answer as well as I could:
I did not do ill with my entire will,
nor, similarly, did you good.*

*"The judgment is lawful, the pronouncement is awful,
this the unhallowed rebuke:
I must go back later as Lord Darth Vader,
and you must go back as Luke."*

Maureen O'Hern

Twilight

*This then is Prufrock's twilight,
this catatonic hesitation of the soul,
the if, or, but, and might
dripping like ether, steady and cold,
paralysis of choice blurred by gray
lightless talk of Michelangelo.*

*Time, measured in quarter notes of pause,
retreats and hides, waits for the coming
of the night, for the bloom of dream
poppies in dark-cooled depths, the waking
of mermaids that move like silver nymphs,
to float the transfixed soul
on orange-glowed leaves to shores
past the place where anemones grow.*

Linda Knight Preston



1st Place Poetry Award

Poker Face

*No moon-child makes of me a tainted sinner.
What need have I of love's sweet-bitter wine?
I lift my glass to honor none at dinner,
As tears splash down this stolid chin of mine.*

*They wash the loss of having no one from me,
While I don a robe of icy-cold contempt
To act the judge and scoff at impositions
From which no other mortals are exempt.*

*I fear to love, therefore, refute the losing;
Deception plays my hand at bidding time.
And so, I am an island, isolated,
Lost upon the sea of pantomime.*

Beverley Topa

3rd Place
Poetry Award

too much, too little

*preserved with BHA
contains one or more
of the following:
cottonseed oil
palm oil, soybean oil
place in your
microwave oven
bake at your
own risk
the studies of
radiation factors
have not been
completed
too much salt
too little salt
not enough vitamins
infant formulas
may be contaminated
jog and exercise
breathe deeply
polluted air
may be hazardous
to your health
check your pills
before swallowing
may contain
cyanide
drink your coffee
but beware
of possible
carcinogens
the surgeon general
has issued warnings
on all packages
of cigarettes
do not let
the children
play near
chemical dumps
dioxin levels
have not
been determined
attend all
demonstrations
against nuclear arms
hold rallies
give speeches
go forward
go backward
stand, sit
voice opinions
swallow quietly
watch as we build
and destroy*

Donna Strabavy

Ode to the Refuse Wrangler

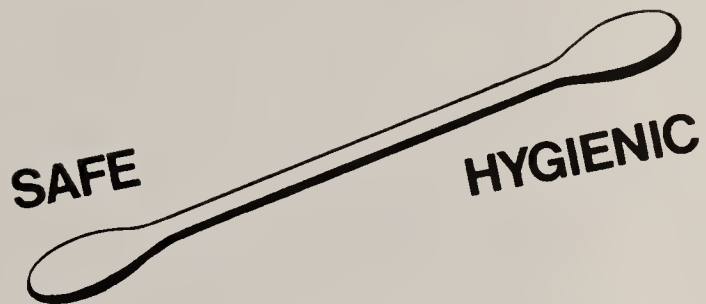
Oh ye, who would and do transpire
To lift life's refuse and my ire.
At crack of dawn, with metallic groan,
Must you assault my ears and home?
And leave behind thee, my good man,
Refuse strewn and dented can?
No longer lidded, split, no doubt,
While, fist upraised at you, I shout,
"This can's not mine, you popinjay!"
I used a Hefty Bag today.

It's the property of that poor soul
Six houses down who's lost control
And flung himself upon the lawn
While sobbing, "That's the eighth can gone."
We ponder the fate of the hapless seven;
Could there be a Trash Can Heaven?
Were they butchered on the scene
Then, eaten by that damned machine?

Now, we all know that you won't tell
'Cause you're in charge of Trash Can Hell.
But, will you explain, to this soul bereft,
How cans are swallowed and trash is left?
Are you truly the refuse man,
Or do you just devour cans
And set the record for noise pollution?
There surely must be some solution!

For, on Wednesday, when it doesn't matter,
You arrive without the clatter.
But not, and this you must admit,
Until stray dogs have done their bit.
Yet, on Saturday, when I would rest,
It seems to me you do your best
To greet the dawn, as it is said,
With noise enough to wake the dead.

Beverley Topa



Many handy uses...

Love

In spring
the trillium
springing to life
on forest floor,

in summer
the pines
spreading their tang
on heat-needed air,

in autumn
the maples
floating golden drops
on chilled streams,

in winter
snow
swaddling dormant life
on tumbled hills.

Forever, you.

Linda Knight Preston

Waves

Waves fall, startled,
Into sparkling particles
Each time we capture
Technicolor pictures
Behind midnight's chime.

Waves fall and roll
Into rambunctious particles
Like bright lacquered balls
Tumbling out of still wet canvases
In surrealistic attics.

Waves fall free form
Into dazzling particles
Like rainbow slices
Kaleidoscoping crisp clear skies
In the parachute's gravitational pull.

Waves fall and drizzle
Into brave new particles
Like still sand seeping
From the expanding hourglass
Into velvet outer-space.

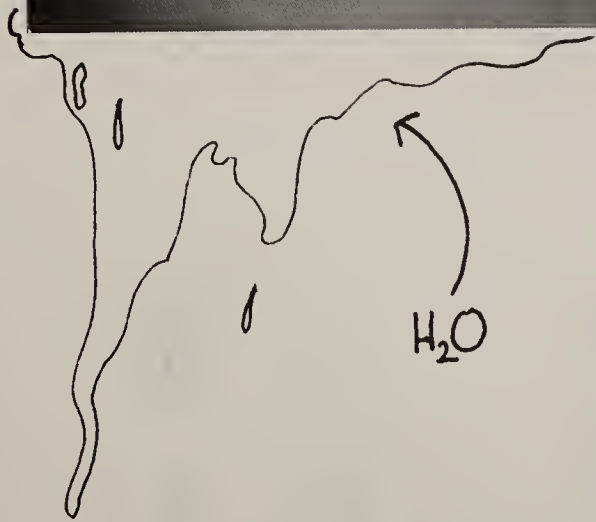
Waves fall and grow
Into fresh smelling particles
Mothers hold
In the curve of their warmth
This side of the orb.

Waves fall and know
Three-dimensional particles
When the rounded day chimes
And rice paper walls quiver
In the curious mind's eye.

Annie Guilbeau Stearns

34°

POEM
HERE



INERT

$\sqrt{69.34}$



Arcade Angels

each Blinklit has eyes
 with sparks dead in the pupil
 each mind bears a splayed patina
 life-mutes plug in to noise
 moon rocks with spread legs
 clutch the machine that eats the coin
 that sends a pavonine spray to
 faces of vandalized puberty to
 each catcher of the electric rainbow
 latchkey babes from rain can hope
 can beat this game
 can spell the strange patois
 it generates, invade this space
 and have their names in lights
 by god

Vicki Behem

AFRICA

POEM

lead us not into ~~evil~~
 But ~~lead~~ deliver us from evil
 Ours is the glory

LEFT

Nacho ship

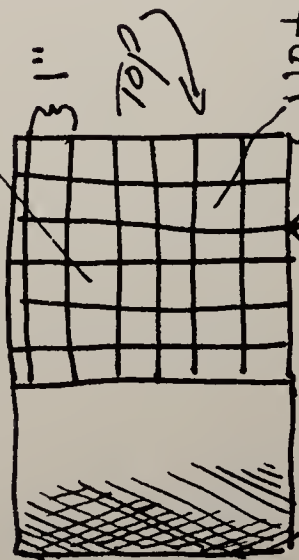


22

22

Edit

This one



Not HERE!

36°

60 mm

copyright 1984

yet never empty

Dawn Walk

Night's casualties litter the sidewalk. The moon locks eyes with the sun, sneaks a sideways glance, then slinks into a secret crevice to escape the blinding glare of the ascension. Stepping aside to avoid a dead pigeon. I skid across the mushy pulp of last eve's news. Yesterday's headlines scream catastrophe. The glistening pavement is slightly damp to the touch of my tennis shoe. I play hopscotch between the beached earthworms and search for a void in the midst of clutter—coffee cups, feathers, and cigarette butts. A lucky penny rests Lincoln side up in the crack of the sidewalk. Jack hammers, ghetto blasters, and careening cars vie for supremacy—sounding an internal alarm. The city is awake.

Linda M. Zelencik

The sky blackens
Trees toss their heads
Heavy with summer finery
Rushing through the bowing trees
Wind
Escaping the torrents of rain
rain that lashes out with gnarled tree branches
Against the roar of thunder
The mighty, groaning relief
Of releasing heavy raindrops
A streak of bright white light
Rips through the velvet darkness
Tearing nature open at the seams

Melanie Denise Hanson

3rd Place Prose Award

Love is not entirely blind. Perhaps near-sighted or myopic would be a better term. Waldo Fenton's introduction into the business of one person's affection for another came about in this manner.

It was a bright spring Friday afternoon around the middle of April. Miss Wycoff was half-heartedly overseeing a study period for sixth grade pupils at Washington Irving grade school. The balmy weather, the late hour of the school day and glorious summer vacation looming on the not too distant horizon all banded together to make the room appear more like a siesta than a study period. All that Miss Wycoff could see, when she glanced up occasionally, was the tops of some thirty heads and downcast eyes, as though in meditation. Such was not the case, however, for this was mass-daydreaming at its best.

Georgie Caywood, of eraser and blackboard cleaning fame, was past the day dreaming stage. Over the years, through trial and many an error, he had mastered the art of falling asleep, instantly and almost soundlessly, while the world spun by around him. Only one closest to him could detect the faintest of snoring sounds.

Midway through the period, a little-caring fly rudely entered the room, regardless of doors and windows being closed. He roamed around at will for a while, snarling and banging his head against walls and ceiling. Finally Harvey Hampstead, with a quick eye and a geography book, laid the noisy intruder low and the roomful of zombies settled down once more.

Love, according to romantic belief, enters with a blare of trumpets, a rattle of drums and a pyrotechnic display. Not so on this day when Dan Cupid unobtrusively appeared in the room and shot his arrow directly into the heart of one, Waldo Fenton.

Waldo's daydreaming endeavors always included the out of doors. Whether it be trees or birds or the back of a garage or a row of garbage cans made no difference, as long as it was outside.

This time he'd extended his vision somewhat in that he was studying the cottony clouds floating effortlessly around in an almost blue sky. He always figured that snow came from white clouds and that if you looked long enough at them they would form shapes of faces and things. That one there, for instance, looked like a castle and that one over there looked like Santa Claus with an extra long nose.

Reluctantly he brought his gaze back from the cloud pictures to the teacher and the inmates of the classroom. About forty per cent of their heads were bobbing and the balance were staring unseeingly at a textbook, open at random on their desks.

Waldo's half-hearted scrutiny of the heads occupying the seats for rows over stopped abruptly, slid back and halted on the tousled, honey-blond head of Irene Bennett. This was the electrifying instant when Cupid's arrow found its mark.

Irene's warm brown eyes and dimpled smile were pointed directly at Waldo, and to further compound the situation, one long-lashed eyelid dropped in an unmistakable wink.

In all of his eleven years and two months on this earth Waldo had never been so stunned. He stiffened as though his seat had been electrified and gulped audibly. He turned at once hot and cold and his face took on such a rosy hue that his freckles seemed to all merge into one. Totally unable to return the smile, he dropped his shocked eyes back down to the open history book on his desk where Stonewall Jackson's fierce gaze stared back at him.

Now, Waldo wasn't totally unaware that girls were a substantial part of the population. He'd seen girls in the past but never really looked at them. As a boy with four older sisters to contend with, he took an apathetic, tongue-in-cheek view of sisters in particular and girls in general. But this was different! This girl had looked at him!! And winked!!

When the bell rang, signaling the end of the period and the school day, Waldo shot out of the building like an escaped convict and didn't stop until he was sitting on the back porch steps at home. Elbows on knees, chin in hands, he pondered deeply as to how to handle this bewildering situation. At the supper table, he pushed the food around on his plate as though it was a checker board. He ate little, not joining in the mealtime conversation, which was mostly girl-talk anyway. He could just imagine their wild, girlish, shrieking laughter if he told them he was becoming romantically involved. Worse yet, the slings and arrows and taunts of his neighborhood cronies if they were to find out.

By the end of a moody, moping around, almost fasting weekend, he had come to a conclusion. His would be a silent courtship. No carrying of

Irene's school books, no going to Saturday matinees together, no walking into the sunset, hand in hand. He was just too shy and too much of a loner. He would do things for her to make her happy and would tell no one. Not even her. This, he could handle.

And so it began. On Monday morning Irene was surprised to discover two newly sharpened pencils on her desk. She looked around the room and asked a few friends but nobody knew where they had come from.

Waldo kept his head down and was pleased to see that she liked the mystery gift. A day or so later Irene found a new art-gum eraser on her desk. Another day, a candy bag containing an assortment of licorice whips, chocolate soldiers and Mary Janes. At least twice a week she was to find a present from a person or persons unknown. A new jumping rope and passes to the Saturday matinee at the Orpheum theatre. When leaf collecting became a project for a biology class, she found a bag on her desk with every known leaf from every known tree in the region.

Now, the cost of these mute love tokens was no problem for Waldo. Ever the industrious little guy, he had an early morning paper route and moon-lighted at several jobs, such as mowing peoples lawns, weeding gardens, polishing cars and peddling bills for theatres for free passes. His paper route in the mornings enabled him to get to school before anyone else so he was never detected while putting his offerings on Irene's desk.

He even went one step further and this was demeaning, but he didn't care. On that rare occasion, if he had his hand raised in class to answer a question, he would hurriedly drop it when he saw that Irene's was also raised. During spelling bees, at which Waldo excelled, he would deliberately misspell a word when he and Irene were the lone contestants left standing so that she could win. Gallantry, you say? No, much more than that.

So it came to pass that school was let out and the lazy days of summer vacation took its place.

Other than his neighborhood chores, Waldo's summer was taken up much the same as most boys his age. Going barefoot and sang-lot softball and swimming and getting sunburned. He did miss seeing Irene as often as he had in school, however. On one pretext or another he managed to pass by her house and possibly get a glimpse of

her. This he did several times a week, naturally on the other side of the street.

One day he contrived a fool-proof scheme to please the girl of his dreams. He acquired a puppy, half blessed with only one known parent, that of the mother. Waldo positioned himself along the sidewalk in an empty lot in the neighborhood. The puppy reclined in a peach basket and Waldo stood beside an apple crate against which leaned a crayon lettered sign on a large square of cardboard. The sign was simplicity itself. "Guess the puppy's name and he's yours," it read.

For three days Waldo stood there and denied to some three score passers-by that Helmut or Wormy or Fatima or Bowser was the puppy's surname. Con-man that he was, he didn't even know. But who could say?

Finally on the fourth day he was rewarded. His heart gave a great lurch and he scrambled to his feet, off of the apple crate on which he had been sitting. Strolling toward him, with a girl friend, was the one he had been waiting for.

Irene picked up the puppy and looked closely into its sad little eyes while Waldo contemplated the ground between his bare toes.

"What a cute little puppy," she said. "He's so fuzzy."

To Waldo's ears, her voice was as musical as the high keys on a piano. He untied his tongue just enough to mumble, "You guessed his name. He's yours." With that, he picked up the sign and the apple crate, turned on his bare heel and stumbled away through the empty lot.

In early September, about a week before school was to start, Waldo took a stroll in the direction of Irene's house. As he drew near he saw a huge moving van in front of the house and casting former shyness to the winds, he dashed across the street.

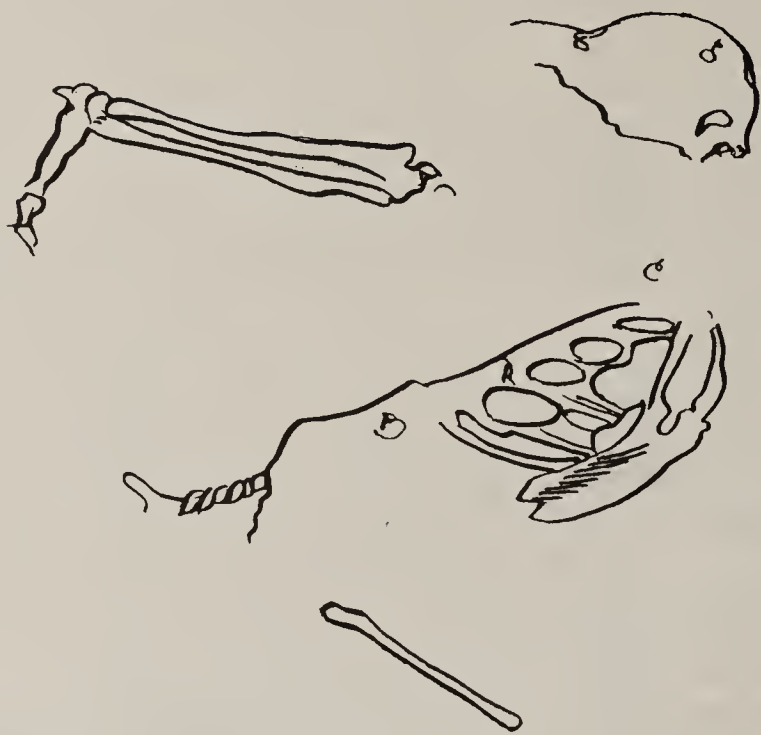
"Are these people moving?" he almost shouted to a burly mover coming out of the house. "Where are they going?"

"They've already gone, kid," replied the man. "A couple of days ago. Somewhere around Akron, Ohio."

Stunned and shocked, Waldo stared at the house for a long, unbelieving moment and then walked aimlessly back the way he had come.

The chaotic first day of school had calmed down to a last period study hall. The teacher was exhausted and this end of the day quietness would give her a chance to relax and gather her thoughts. The day itself was bright and sunny and the pupils were day-dreaming about their, oh so recent, past summer time activities. Waldo had glanced quickly, just once, at the empty seat where Irene had once smiled and winked. His gaze turned then out the window, to the marshmallow clouds, floating dreamily around in a bluer than blue sky. One cloud looked like an elephant lying on its back. Another resembled a palm tree. And one. . . . and one looked like a curly-headed, smiling faced girl and as he stared intently it seemed that one of the eyes had closed in a mischievous wink. Waldo blinked rapidly and watched the cloud drift away. He swallowed a huge lump in his throat, heaved a great sigh, and brought his misty eyes down to the open geography book on his desk. It was open to the state of Ohio and hand-printed in tiny letters, next to the city of Akron, was the small town of. . . . Irene.

Jim Thorley





the tide

*we window-watch
passing parade
of countless faces*

*poorly matched people
shuffle
through the
thoroughfare
of life*

*until
their place
is taken
by other
zero faces*

ian lustig



Mr. McPherson

Mr. McPherson didn't like anything very much. He didn't like his neighbor's cat, and he didn't like the girl who owned the cat. In fact, though only in jest, he would rather be dead than have to listen to that child laugh—Oh no, he couldn't stand that.

When you came right down to it, he didn't like himself that much either. He would rather suffer a nick or two on his chin or his cheek than suffer looking at his own reflection in the bathroom mirror while he shaved.

All the same was what life was to him. "All the same," he would say as he crossed the hall to fetch his morning paper. "All the same," he muttered as he chased the cat from his front porch steps.

"Stupid cat," he thought.

But to be honest, he did have one small fault—a little rag doll whose clothes were tattered and torn from many years of handling. He kept it on a shelf by his bed all to itself. He loved that rag doll more than anything else—more in fact, than life itself.

One early morning, while still in his bed, he noticed that something was different or out of place. Blurry-eyed he looked around his room. "Of course," he thought, "the cat doesn't belong on my shelf."

"Stupid cat," he thought.

But as he rubbed the sleep from his eyes, he saw the tiny rag doll hanging limply from the cat's whiskered, smiling mouth.

Like lightning, he bolted from his bed and nearly struck the cat dead. But it was too late. Off the shelf the cat sprang toward the open bedroom window with the rag doll frantically waving its arms for help still in its mouth.

With little thought and with less hesitation, Mr. McPherson leapt through his bedroom window after the cat. For a moment he found himself suspended between heaven and earth nearly two stories up—but only for a moment.

Before he hit the cold grey of his concrete drive, he thought he heard the laughter of a child.

"Stupid cat," he thought.

Thomas J. Purcell



Destiny Knows

*Some drink & wonder & know—
Some sit & wonder & know—
... just like the desert,
dry—thirsty—cold—no
destiny,*

*that we know of...
... but they all survive through
their own existence what
ever it may be—or said to
be—or made to be—
or what will be,*

yet destiny must be...

*Some drink & wonder & know
Some sit & wonder & know
Louis A. Robinson*

Streetman

*Streetman's what we call him
No one knows his name
Doorways are his home
Curbstones are his pillow
Muscatel to warm his bones
Children stop to mock and tease
The landlord comes and gives a kick
To send him on his way
Wearily he plods the streets
Searching for another place
Bandits beat and rob him
For the coppers in his pocket
Battered there he lies
The man comes down and busts him
Streetman's what they call him
Dragging him away
No one really knows him
Or takes the time to see
If maybe he's just lonely
Not just the wretch we see
He's just that old and tattered man
That no one wants to know
Streetman's what we call him
That's all we want to know*

Ralph Mauer

The Photographer

2nd Place
Poetry Award

I see my life
in Black and White
There are no greens or blues
A variation of shutter speeds
but a lack of shades or hues

I view my past in Olive Drab
and spend my days with grey

I trap my subjects on
Daylight film
and take their souls away

Once inside a camera store
I'm a prisoner who can't get free

As I gaze at gadgets and bags galore
they whisper
"Take me, take me, take me."

I spend my money on yet something else,
my last dollar, nickel or dime
in search of the perfect photograph
hoping, maybe,

"This time, this time, this time."
I search hallways and alleys and vacant lots
with my flash and light meter in hand
and though some call me photographer
I am truly a haunted man

My hobby, my life and my work
are all the same in one
and with each progression to another stage
it seems I've just begun
As I struggle to perfect my craft
I work, I study, I read and write
and I'm told that I mumble in my sleep,
"If I only had
a little more light."

Tom Frazee





Odyssey, 1948

*In the waning day, the commuter train's red lights
Twinkled diminishingly as the train receded in the distance.
It was growing chilly and the homecomers hurried
As they walked purposefully into the dusk.
I watched them from the station platform with a lonely feeling.*

*They scattered in all directions as wavelets on a quiet pond,
Each with a destination, united in their will to separate towards home.
I, too, was homeward bound, and their closeness to theirs
Made me realize the distance to mine,
And the dusk, and the cold, and the loneliness I felt,
All struck me together as a smashing wave.*

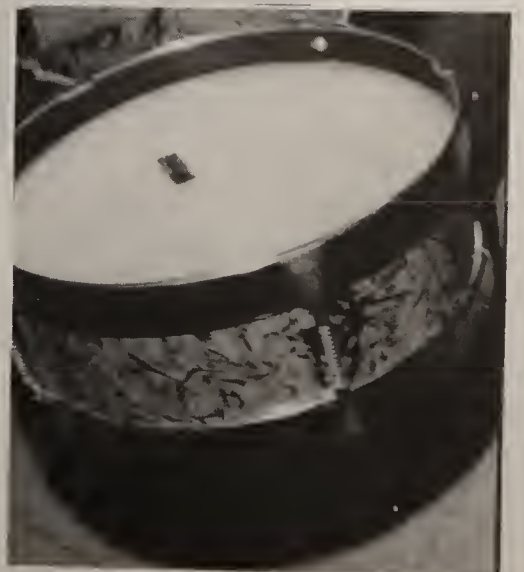
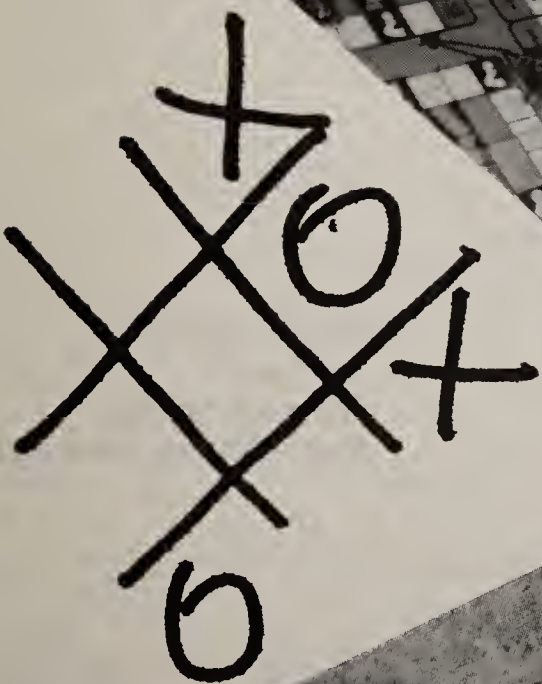
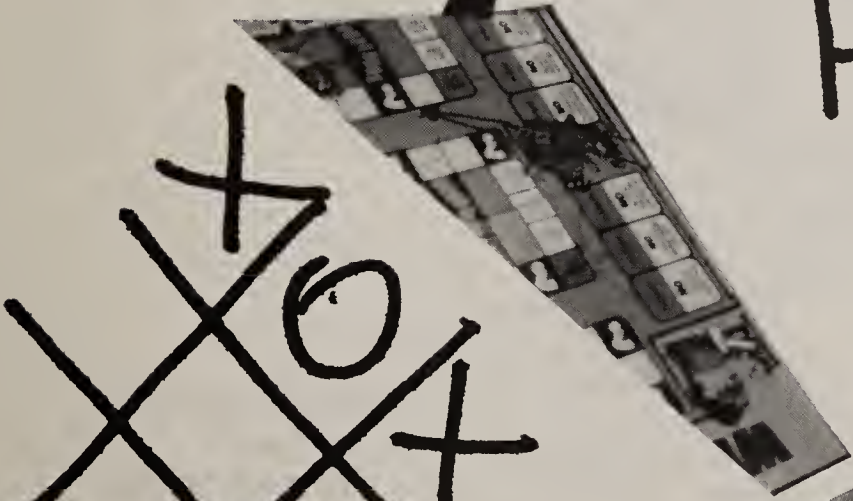
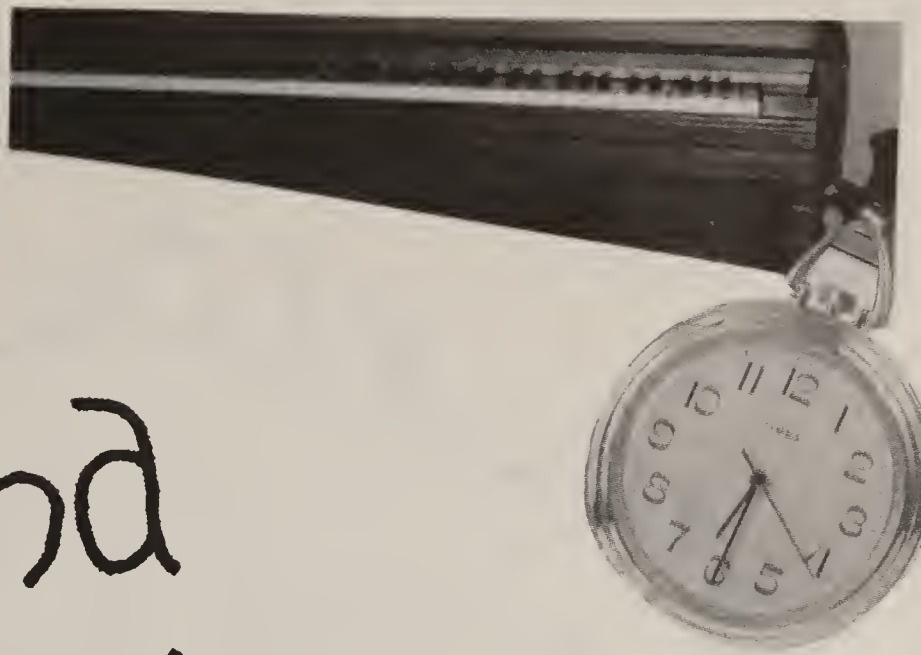
*I wanted to cry out, for the affairs of my life
Had reached a nexus in their development,
In a marriage that was not working,
An occupation that was not satisfying,
An unseen struggle for maturity that was not succeeding.*

*The welling desperation I felt intensified the cold and loneliness
And I was chilled to my soul, but I could not cry out.
Instead, I shrivelled within, succumbing to all vectoring conditions,
A dried sponge torn from the sea.*

*The train I awaited, gradually grew in size,
Coming from the opposite direction, its cyclops eye gleaming,
Reflected in the shiny rails, outlining the fish-bone ties.
A few passengers alighted, I climbed on,
And took a window seat in the nearly vacant double-decker.
Within the hour, this struggling salmon would be returning to the vesting stream
With its semblance of warmth and restoration.
The loneliness then melted into the lines of a cast-off newspaper.*

Henry P. White

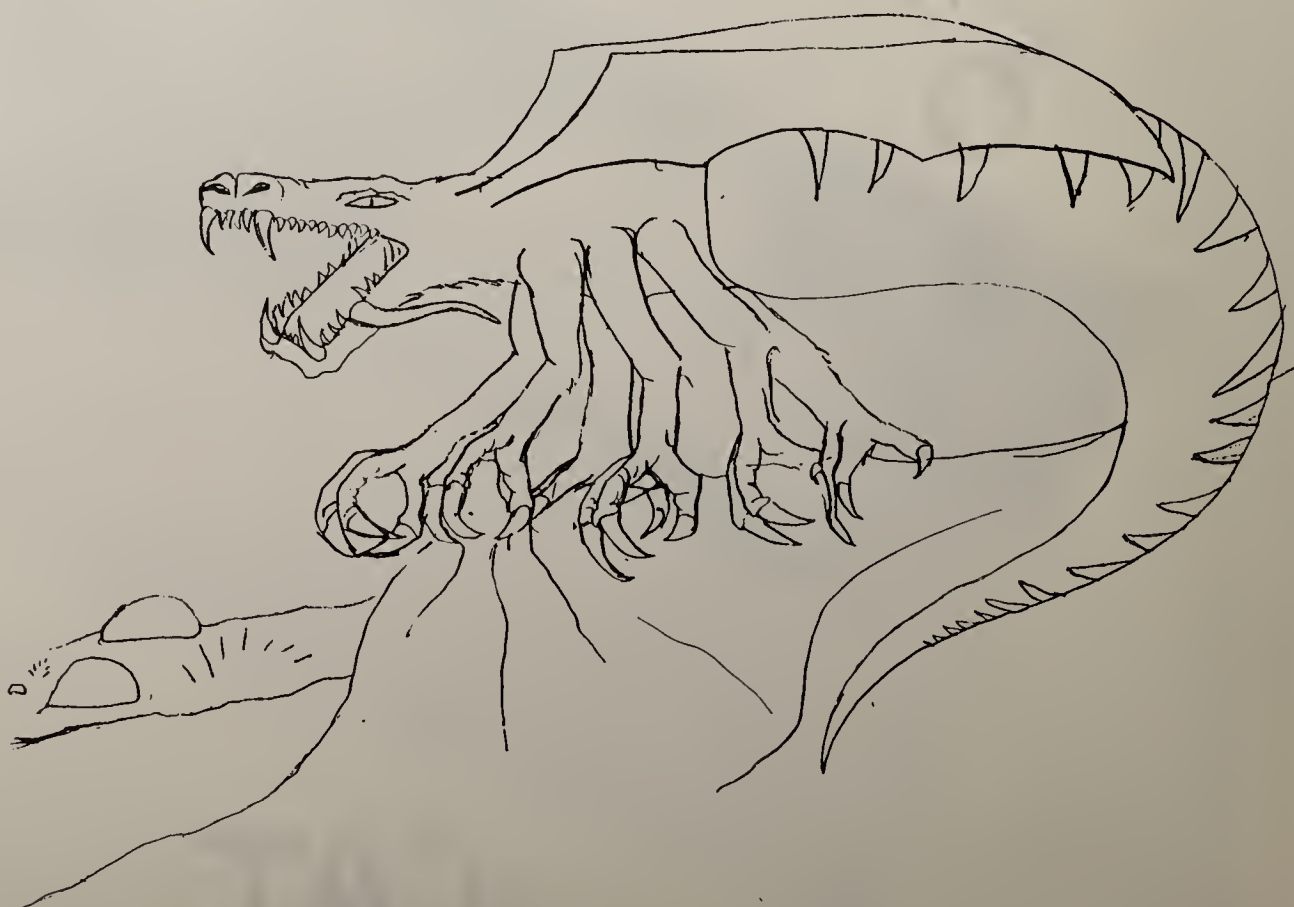
Young Authors and Young Artists



CAT



*Delmar Samatar
4th Grade
Jefferson School
South Orange, New Jersey*



Fall

*Fall is fun.
There is much work to be done.
Like raking leaves and such,
and picking pumpkins very much.*

*Andrea Uetz
3rd Grade
Morton Elementary School
Hammond, Indiana*

The Peacock

*It is vain,
but not plain.
It is pretty.
It is not a pity.
Sometimes used for hats.
It's sixty times prettier than cats.
I'll give clues.
It does not wear shoes
or tutus.
Haven't you guessed?
It doesn't wear a vest.
Its singing is not as pretty as a bell.
It's prettier than a shell.
It's a peacock!*

*Patrick Mesterharm
3rd Grade
Eads School
Munster, Indiana*

Haiku

*The big hill will stand
like a king's big shining crown
greeting the people.*

*Brooke Gardberg
Age 9
Frank Hammond School
Munster, Indiana*





Missing Link

*Just look at me.
What do you think?
Is what you see
The missing link?*

***Tanya George
8th Grade
Grimmer Middle School
Schererville, Indiana***

***Delmar Samatar
4th Grade
Jefferson School
South Orange, New Jersey***

Nightlight

*When you go to sleep at night,
And the stars are shining bright,
You get ideas inside your head.
While you're lying on your bed,
And there are monsters that you dread,
You hide underneath your pillow.
Then, the demon outside is just a willow,
But still you dream of a giant armadillo,
Jump out of the covers,
And turn on the light.
Nothing in sight,
Am I right?
Go back to sleep.
Goodnight.*

***Karen Mastey
8th Grade
Grimmer Middle School
Schererville, Indiana***



***Suzanne Turkaleski
Grade 7
Grimmer Middle School
Schererville, Indiana***



*Daniel Lavienna
Grade 5
Webster School
Gary, Indiana*



The Kaleidoscope

The Kaleidoscope

*Rolling, falling, turning, forming
Always becoming
Never is.*

Then it paints us a picture.

*Perhaps only one of an infinite number
of worlds that it can create,
Or but one of an infinite number
of permutations of its strange
microcosm.*

*Always leading us to beauty and wonder,
Amazement at its creative power,
Awe, and, yes, suspicion of its motives.
As it leads us through a thousand,
No, a million worlds
We implore it to guide us
with only a word of reassurance.*

It only tells us this:

*The next world beseeches you to come.
Perhaps a lonely, uninhabited world,
Perhaps our own.*

*And although there is anxiety
There is also exquisite joy,
For each new world it brings us
Is an infinite,
Yes, an ultimate one.*

*We ask that we may study this
world more intensely.*

It leads us further on.

*In a heated excitement we run,
Run along with it like children.
We ask if we may bask in
warm, childish frivolity.*

*It leads us on, like the schoolmaster,
And we follow.*

*To our great surprise we find
that it has led us back
And tells us this in all wisdom:
The next worlds are for you to create.
Then we smile and know
That we have never left our home.*

Steve Sersic

8th Grade

*Our Lady of Perpetual Help
Hammond, Indiana*



The Dawn

The dawn is coming
the night is gone
the dew is sparkling on the lawn.
The sun is rising
the moon is down
the people are waking in the town.

Mike Habzansky
7th Grade
Grimmer Middle School
Schererville, Indiana

Yesterday in Today

The spring season smelled like the
newly mowed pastures through which
we used to walk;
The summer air tasted like the
barbequed steaks, fresh off the
grill, that we once had at our
picnics;
Autumn looked like a Pennsylvania
artist's picture of our ideally
silent, yet changing world;
Still the dead-winter's snow
felt as cold as your heart
when you left.

Jennifer Durham
Junior
Munster High School
Munster, Indiana

Poems

Poems are things I try to rhyme,
But they don't rhyme all the time.
Sometimmes I even spell words wrong,
Then the poem seems too long.
Because I try to think real fast,
I can't afford to think in the past.
And when I've started I haven't quitted,
And all I've started have been written.
And though this poem is not my best,
I've finished it like all the rest.

Don Orban
7th Grade
Grimmer Middle School
Schererville, Indiana

*Patient not the hunger,
It cries throughout their youth.
It can't be nourished, or be fed,
Just slowly taught the truth.*

*The hunger stretches dreams too far,
It holds their past too near.
Then one day they smell the broth
Brewing in their fear.*

*Their souls have not grown strong enough
To pour it into bowls.
But vision's blinded by the steam,
And hunger's in their souls.*

*So tender hands lift the pot,
And burning broth is flung
Past their tongues and to their hearts
That now are not so young.*

*Deep into the flesh it soaks,
Through the mind, and pulse, and breath.
Let them fight, and claw, and spit;
The substance knows not death.*

*But thrives from that day forward,
Forever more it seems.
As it lingers through the fingers
Of the hands which sculpt their dreams.*

*Tomorrows do not ease the pain,
But time will soothe the burns.
As strength and callous gently coat
The heart that someday learns.*

*Of scars which won't let them forget
Reality's first taste.
And of those first few lessons learned
Because they ate in haste.*

*Now all their haste is forgotten.
Slowly they sip from their cup.
Satisfied not is their hunger—
Yet every young dreamer grew up.*

*Erica Hanson
7th Grade
Grimmer Middle School
Schererville, Indiana*





*Todd Kosteba
Age 9
Johnston School
Highland, Indiana*

Joys of Christmas

*One thing that makes Christmas nights
is all the pretty Christmas lights,
Blinking lights and flashing trees,
snowy sidewalks and things like these—
Santa landing on the roof
(You can hear each little hoof),
reindeer flying across the skies,
twinkles shine in children's eyes.
Carolers with cheeks as red as roses
stroll past snowmen with carrot noses.*

*Tracy Kijewski
3rd Grade
Roxana School
East Chicago, Indiana*

Snow

*When hail falls,
the clouds are throwing balls.
When the snow came down,
the street got a crown.
When the snow falls on the trees,
it looks like little white peas.*

*John Cantrell
3rd Grade
Roxana School
East Chicago, Indiana*

One Bad Apple

One lonely summer afternoon, Suzie selected a large, red apple and took a juicy bite. Then she tossed it into the garbage pail.

Suddenly, the apple began to grow and it grew until it was eight feet tall and two feet wide. Also, it grew two beady black eyes and four blue razor-sharp teeth.

As Suzie left her bedroom, the apple bit her and soon Suzie was also an apple. Then everyone was being bitten by the apples. It was an epidemic!

The mayor of Cider City saw a large horde of apples and fled from Cider City. Two days later, the mayor came back with the United States Army on his side. They got into a vicious war with the apples. The apples won by shooting down the army people with their seeds.

The same day the Navy and the Air Force came to try, but they lost too. Soon the Giant men on Apple Island heard about Cider City and came to kill these huge apples. They squeezed all the juice out and diced the skins and meat and put it in apple pies.

After the first bite of pie was eaten, the human apples changed back into regular humans.

Cider City lived appley ever after.

Amy Hollander
7th Grade
Grammar Middle School
Schererville, Indiana

Ranger, my Dog

Ranger is a collie and my dog. Even though Miss Polito, my reading teacher, thinks the dictionary should be my best friend, Ranger still comes in first place! I like his strawberry pink tongue when he licks me lightly over my face. He is so pretty because he has a snowy white mane and floppy black ears. It's such a sad story when Ranger's eyes look at me in a begging way at dinner. Ranger's favorite spot to be petted is his belly. The funniest thing ever did was when I laid cookies for Santa down by the fireplace and Ranger ate them! I love Ranger a lot, and he will always be my very best friend.

Michelle Layer
4th Grade
Frank Hammond School
Munster, Indiana

I Can't Do This!

*One day my language teacher said we had to write a poem.
"How awful this is going to be," I thought on my way home.*

*When I got home, I thought and thought, but couldn't get a word.
I laughed and cried and shook myself and said, "This is absurd."*

*The next day I went down to school feeling pretty grim.
I feared that she would yell at me and tear me limb from limb.*

*She asked me if I had my poem and looked at me with sorrow.
She said I better get a poem, the latest is tomorrow.*

*I couldn't think of anything, and so I got a book.
I hope she hasn't heard this one, or I'll be up the brook.
(It should be "creek," but this is a poem.)*

*"I've never seen a purple cow,
I never hope to see one;
But I can tell you anyhow
I'd rather see than be one!"*

*I know I'm gonna get an F; she'd heard the poem before.
I know this 'cause she screamed at me and kicked me out the door.*

P.S.—Next time I'll write a haiku!

Beth Stover
8th Grade
Wilbur Wright Middle School
Munster, Indiana

*("The Purple Cow"
by Geleh Burgess)*

The Price I Must Pay

*As I awoke, I heard a sound.
I looked out of my cell
and remembered that I was found.
My secrets are lost.
My mistakes I regret.
For I am paying the cost of freedom,
instead of living free.*

*The fear I had taught me well.
The dreams I had could never foretell
The place I was going before I fell.
I know what is right now.
It's all in a song.
But I must pay for what I did wrong.*

Amy Boske
7th Grade
Grimmer Middle School
Schererville, Indiana

A Power Called Friendship

During Thanksgiving, I went to South Dakota with Mr. Brummel. When I got there it was snowing hard. Alesia, my friend, and I were dressing to go outside when Mr. Dyk, Alesia's Dad, said, "We need a couple of dogs. Would you two like to be dogs?"

Alesia said, "Ha! Ha! Very funny, Dad."

"No, I mean it," said her Dad. "We need somebody to chase the pheasants out of the trees."

"Oh, you mean you want us to help you hunt," Alesia and I both said.

"Yes," both he and Mr. Brummel said.

"We'll be glad to," I yelled, running upstairs. I quickly put on my flannel pants and a warmer shirt. I came downstairs and put on my boots, coat and gloves. Then we dashed outside and hopped into the pickup. Mr. Dyk drove to his woods located in his back yard. He explained that he was going to drop us off and that we should walk through the woods. He and Mr. Brummel planned to drive to the other side. He told us to wait about five minutes before walking through. We waited and then started walking through those dense woods. I thought it would take us forever. As we went deeper into the woods, it got darker. But in the darkness I walked up to a pheasant and saw its beauty. The different colors glowed: green, red, brown. "They are so beautiful," I said.

When we walked deeper yet into the woods, I heard a strange haunting sound. I wondered what it was. Then I heard a gun shot. "I'm not afraid," I told myself.

We had about two more miles to go. The sun had gone down and it was even darker. The walk was almost over when I heard that strange sound again. Then somebody yelled, "Let's get out of here!" After that I heard the sound again. Then I saw where the sound had come from. It was just a bull. The walk was over.

"Hey, you girls, get out of there," someone yelled.

We started to run. The bull's bellowing became louder. It sounded alarming. Then we realized that the bull was right behind us, charging at us. We ran as fast as we could. The bull chased Alesia and cornered her. He pawed the ground and snorted at Alesia. I searched frantically for something that would stop him. The only thing I saw was the gun one of the hunters had dropped while running from the bull. I picked it up and ran toward Alesia yelling at the bull. I called it names and made dumb noises. I tried everything except the gun. That monster just wouldn't give in. I held the gun in my hands. Alesia was crying; I had to help her! I put the gun up and pulled the trigger. Nothing came out. It wasn't loaded. Then I ran up to the bull. I took the gun by the end and hit that monster as hard as I could. I gave it all my power. The bull backed away and moved over, finally walking to the rest of the cows. He made his awful sound again. He knew he had been beaten. He will never ever do that to anyone again.

I walked toward the bull and said, "Next time you'll be more kind!"

When we walked back to the pickup, Mr. Brummel said, "I'm glad someone has enough guts to teach that bull a lesson!"

Alesia turned to me and gave me a big hug and said, "Thanks for saving my life!"

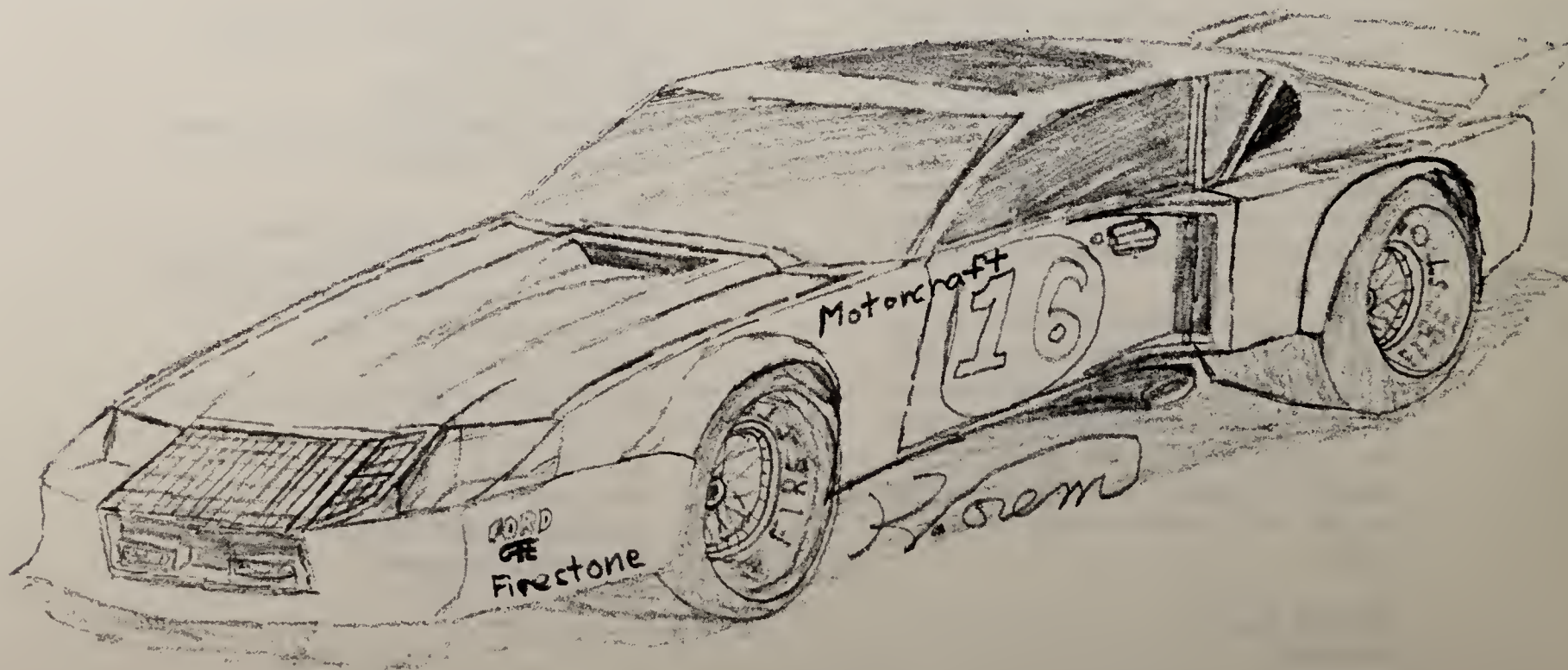
I said, "What are friends for?"

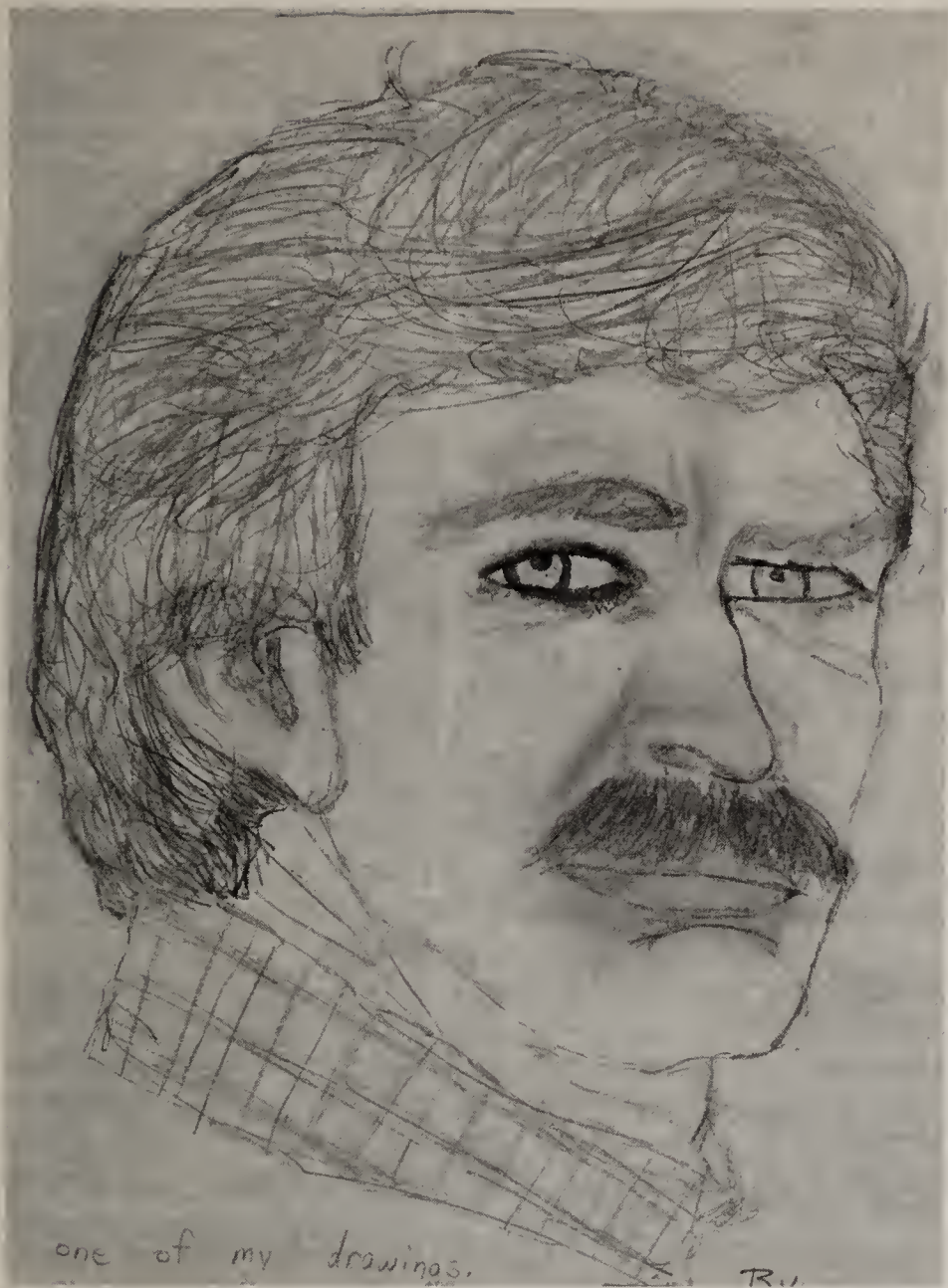
Together we got in the truck and went home.

When I arrived at Alesia's house she quickly ran inside and told everybody what had happened. I was pretty proud of myself so I had to call my parents. I called them and told them everything. When I hung up it was time for bed so I went to bed with my head full of things to dream.

Anneke Swart
7th Grade
Highland Christian School
Highland, Indiana

Kris Korem
8th Grade
Grimmer Middle School
Crown Point, Indiana





*Deborah Smith
Grade 4
Edgar L. Miller School
Merrillville, Indiana*



*Todd Kosteba
Age 9
Johnston School
Highland, Indiana*

The X-278

O-Hare Airport, 1983: the new X-728 is preparing for take-off. Steve Crane, the builder of this fabulous new jet, has been anxiously awaiting this day. Passengers stare in awe at the new plane readying for its flight to the Cook Islands.

Soon the plane taxied down the runway and took off. The watch tower called to the 728 and said, "It's the most beautiful sight I've ever seen."

David Marsh, the pilot, replied, "I'll watch it on the six o'clock news."

The plane had been airborne for about forty-five minutes when the pilots noticed the hydraulic pressure was dropping and the compass was going crazy. The co-pilot, Gary Tires, went down to the hydraulic cabin to check it out. David called Control after Gary left and reported their problem.

When Gary got to the cabin, he saw some green puddles, but was confused because hydraulic fluid is red. Gary couldn't see clearly so he lit a match. Suddenly a great roar of thunder was heard throughout the plane. Fire tore through the cabin door and the whole plane shook violently. David switched on the auto-pilot and went down to the hydraulic room to find out what was happening. On the way down the stairs, he found Gary two rooms over, in the captain's lounge, still alive but badly hurt. He had bruises, scratches, and a nasty bump on his head.

After extinguishing the fire, David took Gary to the pub, one of the few parts of the plane that was left untouched by the explosion. David used what medical knowledge he had—which wasn't much—to treat Gary.

David went to the radio after leaving Gary. "728 calling Control. Come in, Control....come in, Control." No one answered.

David was getting worried. He wasn't sure where they were, and the instruments were inoperable. He did know one thing. The pressure gauge on his pilot's watch showed that they were falling about 700 feet every 15 minutes. He couldn't do anything so he began preparing for a crash in the ocean. He figured they should be around the East Pacific Basin, and, at the rate they were falling, they would hit the water before reaching the Cook Islands.

Back at Control a voice barked, "Captain, come here, please, and hurry!"

"What's the matter, Lieutenant?"

"The 728 has disappeared from the radar screen!"

"What!?"

"I've double-checked. They were way off course and we suddenly lost all contact a half hour ago."

"Lieutenant, scramble all search-and-find planes."

"Yes, sir!"

Back at the ship, David yelled at Gary, "What are you doing in here?"

"I don't know. It just seemed like a good idea."

"If you're sure you can handle it, I wish you would stay here; I need you."

"I know."

"Dave, how come we're still flying?"

"I'm not sure, but in about nine minutes we're going to crash into the Pacific."

The stewardess broke their concentration with more bad news.

"Sirs," she said in a panicky voice, "the passengers are beginning to panic! What should I do?"

"Move them to the back of the plane, and fast!"

When they hit the water, people began screaming in terror. After being under water for about two minutes, they realized no water was entering the plane.

"Either we're awful darn lucky, or we haven't waited long enough," said Gary.

"I'll make sure," said Dave. He could hear prayers being whispered through the plane. After a while, it was getting hard to breathe, but not too bad yet.

"Have you noticed a spotter plane keeps passing over?" said Gary.

"Yeah. I can see the surface waves," said Dave. "How can we signal it?"

"Do we have any cargo that will float?" said Gary.

"No."

"What do we have?" asked Gary.

"Windows, plastic, paint, and some foods—oh, and some industrial magnets."

A boy was playing with a compass, and Dave noticed something peculiar. The compass kept spinning and wouldn't stop. Dave realized the

magnets on board were causing the disturbance. Dave told Gary about this, and they figured if they could somehow get the magnets out of the plane they would do the same to the spotter plane, and make the pilot curious.

They had to make a magnet powder to fit through a small hole in the plane and try not to let in too much water at the same time. They had beat on the magnets until it was almost impossible to breathe. Finally finished, they started shoving half-inch pieces of magnet through a straw-sized hole in the front of the plane. Once finished, all they could do was hope.

The spotter plane noticed a disturbance in his compass and called the base. "Re-con One to Control. What was the 728 carrying for cargo?"

"Let's find out. Hang on; here it comes." On the computer print-out were the following things: windows, plastic, paint, various foods and some industrial magnets.

"Hold it...I think we've found them."

After making another pass at a lower altitude, he saw them, barely, but he saw them. "Whoopee! We found them!" Joy ran through the control tower.

Five p.m. and no sign of rescue! Suddenly the few passengers left alive sighted divers. The divers put forty two-inch chains around the plane. Fourteen helicopters slowly started to raise the plane out of the water. Six of the forty chains broke, and the plane started sinking. Before it sunk completely, the ten passengers and three crew members escaped unharmed.

At a welcome-back party, Dave asked, "Chris, why did you do it?"

Chris said, "What are you talking about?" Chris, Dave's friend, was getting worried.

"I know you did it. You're the only one besides me who had access to the hydraulic room before take-off. No one else knew how to disconnect the tubes."

"I wanted to fly that plane. Me! Not you or anyone else," Chris said sadly.

"Guards!" called Dave.

"I'm sorry," said Chris.

"It's hard for me to do this," said Dave. "Take him away! Sorry, Chris." Chris was sentenced to twenty years in jail and the X-728 was rebuilt.

Joel Pogar
8th Grade
Highland Junior High
Highland, Indiana

The Sea Is Coming

It was a strange night; a night to be wary, a night to be afraid. The tall street-lamps shed pools of light on the village square. There was no moon. Softly, the sea slapped against the rocks. And far away on the horizon, a ship was coming.

Tara could not sleep that night. She lay in bed, tossing and turning, but horrible dreams haunted her mind. Dreams of the sea—dreams of death. She got out of bed, her long, pale hair glowing in the darkness of her bedroom, falling around her like a veil. She put her hand on the windowsill and looked out on the sleeping village. A gentle voice whispered into her mind, “The sea is coming... beware... the sea is coming.” Her fingers tapped the rhythm on the windowsill: the sea is coming, the sea is coming, the sea is coming.

Suddenly, a ship docked on the rocks. Tara turned slightly to look at it, never stopping the finger-tapping rhythm. It was a black ship with black sails. A ship of darkness, and a ship of death.

A wild, hypnotic tune raced through her head. Her fingers tapped faster: the sea is coming, the sea is coming... She stared straight ahead, never turning her gaze from the great black ship. Men began pouring out of the ship. They were wild men, barbarians, with long black hair that streamed in the wind. They carried clubs and swords. Their teeth gnashed and their feet stamped as they let out blood-curdling shrieks of glee, “Death to all! We will triumph!” They were men born to kill and be killed.

Villagers rushed out of their houses. They ran into the streets, screaming. The wild men began a frenzied sword-dance, slashing and pounding at anyone within reach. Blood ran down the rocks and into the sea. The wild men laughed as the villagers ran for their lives. Then, they began to burn the village. More men piled out of the ship, bearing torches, setting fire to Tara’s beautiful village.

Tears ran down Tara’s cheeks as she stood, silent by the window, her fingers tapping: the village is burning, the village is burning, the village is burning... The tapping became a pounding. Tara pounded the windowsill until her hand bled. She cried harder and the pain in her hand grew worse as her tears entered the open cuts.

Her mother flung open the bedroom door and ran screaming into the room. “Tara, my child!” she shrieked, her face streaked with tears, “the village is burning! Come, quickly—we must escape! We will run to the hills! Tara! Please, come with me.”

Tara did not turn to face her mother. Her fingers tapped on the windowsill, never stopping, never missing a beat.

“Tara!” her mother screamed.

“Mother,” Tara said quietly, “the village will not burn. The sea... the sea is coming.” Her glazed eyes stared out the window, seeing nothing but the blue-green sea topped with white foam.

Her mother grabbed the pale hair that was draped around Tara, forcing Tara’s face away from the window. Tara felt the sting of her mother’s hand whipping across her face.

“Foolish girl!” her mother screeched. “You will die! Die in the fires of your village! The sea will not save you!” She turned and ran, slamming the door behind her, and Tara was alone.

Tara turned back to look out the window. The whole village was on fire. Flames leapt up hungrily, devouring the village like an angry tiger. The black ship was gone.

Suddenly, as Tara watched, the sea began to rise. Huge waves crashed against the coast. They rose to the village square, crashing into the flames. Breathlessly, Tara whispered, “The sea is coming—the sea has COME!”

A colossal wave rose from the sea. It was a tidal wave! Tara began to laugh and cry at the same time. She laughed because the barbarians had gone, and the sea had come. She cried for her mother and her village. Soon the tears died away and Tara simply laughed without really knowing why.

Then, there was a great noise, like the world’s end...

The flames were gone, the men were gone, the ship was gone, the people were gone. Nothing was left in that deserted village but one little girl, laughing in her bedroom.

And the sea was calm once more.

Sofia Samatar

Age 12

South Orange Middle School

South Orange, New Jersey

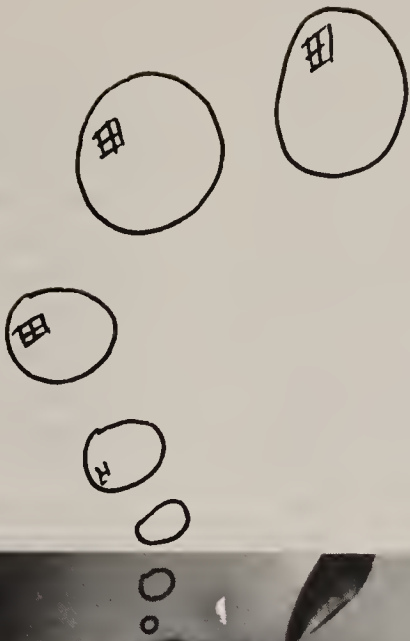
Opening Night

*Children wandering nervously around backstage
A twinkle in their eyes and butterflies in their stomachs
The soft sweeping of worn, pink ballet shoes with an exciting history,
rubbing gently against the cold stage
Long-legged, elegant, graceful girls doing pirouettes, cartwheels,
and splits, fulfilling fantasies and dreams
Off to the side of the stage you hear the snappy tapping of character
shoes in worn leather strapped securely onto a young foot
All around the stage there is commotion, hustling and bustling, and
never-ending chatter.
In an extravagant make-up room filled with a large mirror, light
bulbs, and cushioned seats, all thoughts of being a movie star
or a model travel dreamily through your mind.
The rubbing, smearing, wiping and brushing of bright make-up to
prepare theatrical faces
Whether sweeping their locks into a sophisticated knot on the top of
their heads,
Or letting it hang softly below their ears,
Everyone is excited and thrilled.
Last minute changes, costumes switched, props put up
Nervous titters of novice actors and actresses and a confident
chuckle of the veterans
The audience sees a pair of large, luminous, curious, made up eyes
peeking through the velvety red curtains trying to find out
how many people came to see their debut and their chance to be
a star for 15 minutes
You hear the soft footsteps of children pacing back and forth,
moving their lips with no sound coming out
Their eyes are looking toward the ceiling ornamented with spotlights,
string, wires and microphones, as if it were Christmas
The boys feeling encaged in their costumes, acting nonchalant as if
today were any other day
Suddenly a stage light flickers on and off, giving the signal everyone
was holding their breath for and expecting to get.
A few "Quiet! Quick! Places everyone! Smiles, Smiles! Overact in
this scene! Jenny, Lisa, stop primping! Get in place! Good luck!"
Everyone giving their hair last minute pats, tightening toe shoes and
strapping on character shoes
Wishing good luck as if going on a trip to Mars
Smiles are forced; poses are struck; voices are pitched.
The simple flick of a switch and the lights shine as one, as bright
as the sun.
Then comes the loud screech of the microphone as the play is announced.
Giving each other an "I-can't-believe-this-is-it" look
What you have been slaving to perfect for weeks begins.
With a loud SWOOSH the red velvet curtains ripple and fold as they
make a dramatic opening.
Inquisitive faces stare at you.
The piano is starting to pound out the opening song.
THE PLAY HAS BEGUN.*

Lynn Rosen

Age 13

*Hebrew Academy of Northwest Indiana
Hammond, Indiana*



GETTING OVER IT

A Play in One Act
by

Debra A. Smith

CHARACTERS
Sam LeLand
Evelyn Aimes
Charles Evans

Time: The present.

Place: An apartment livingroom containing a sofa, a chair or two, many plants, and a bar in the UR corner. A comfortable, lived-in apartment, but well-kept. A modern look. An UCHallway opens into the living-room, with the kitchen and one bedroom on one side and a second bedroom on the other side. A cut-out window behind the bar reveals part of the kitchen.

Scene I Saturday morning, early autumn

Scene II Three days later

Scene III A month later

1st Place Prose Award

SCENE I

At rise: An apartment livingroom. It is Saturday, fall, about 8:00 a.m. SAM LELAND, 24, enters from hallway, barefoot, just-awakened, wearing a too-large terrycloth robe. He walks behind the bar to the Mr. Coffee and sleepily goes through the coffee-making process while looking around the room, noticing that several items are missing (i.e., a gap in bookcase, empty corner, etc.). He then walks to the front door, opens it, gets newspaper, and plops it automatically on coffee-table without looking at it. He walks towards wall, sees broken glass swept into corner and a broom leaning against the wall next to the pile of glass. He stops, looks down at his bare feet, and creeps away carefully, almost as though he expects the broken glass to jump at him. SAM sits sofa C, surveys his feet for broken glass, finds none, and spies his almost new, very stylish hiking boots next to couch. He reaches for them, puts them on, then goes behind bar and makes himself a cup of coffee: 1/3 coffee, 1/3 cream, 1/3 sugar. SAM returns to couch, leans back with coffee, feet up on coffee-table (all morning rituals) as ALARM CLOCK goes off offstage. We hear an "Oh, Shit!" and a noisy scuffling, tripping, banging before the clock is successfully shut off. SILENCE.

SAM (Shouting into bedroom): I hope you're not planning on going back to sleep. We have rehearsal at noon, and you promised to take me to the mall first, remember?

(Silence. Then, EVELYN, 32, enters from her bedroom, looking much like death warmed over, yet fairly attractive in her large terrycloth robe.)

EVELYN (leans against doorway): I'll kill you. That's just what I'll do, I'll kill you. Just as soon as I can see straight, I'll kill you.

SAM: We have to go to the mall first. You promised. (Goes to coffee) I already made you a fresh pot of Hills Brothers—caffeine included. Sit down.

EVELYN: Do you know what time it is? (Crosses to sofa) Does he know what time it is? Of course, he knows what time it is.

SAM: I'm glad you realized what a ridiculous rhetorical question that was.

EVELYN: Why do you always do this to me? Why do you always sneak into my room in the middle of the night and set my alarm clock for 8:00 on Saturday mornings?

SAM: More rhetorical mumblings. Besides, I don't always. You've gotten to sleep in for the last three. Also, I don't "sneak" in. I walk in. Sometimes I even hum to myself. I can't help it if you're a sound sleeper. It is now 8:00. You will drink coffee until 9:00, take two hours to get dressed, then we'll have one rushed hour to get to the mall, buy shoes, and get to rehearsal.

EVELYN: I don't understand you. I have never understood why you think or act the way you do. But I especially don't understand why we have to make another trip to the mall for shoes. You've already bought three pair this month.

SAM: I told you, those were dress shoes, hiking shoes, and house shoes. I totally forgot about casual shoes.

EVELYN: I know I haven't picked up a *Gentleman's Quarterly* lately, but if it's "in" to wear hiking shoes with a robe, I'm not going to ask what one wears house shoes with.

SAM ((Sarcastically)): A tux.

EVELYN: Of course. How silly of me.

SAM: Well, actually...

EVELYN: None of your ten minute intellectual speeches containing seventeen letter words this early, please.

SAM: Okay. (Pause) There's glass on the floor.

EVELYN (Remembers. Looks over at broken glass. Goes for more coffee): Oh.

SAM: Oh, she says. Just "oh." One little "oh." Aren't you going to reenact the big scene for me? (No response) Okay then, how about elaborating on the most dramatic moments? You can even sit down and give me a monotone delivery—I'll just use my imagination for the rising action and climax.

EVELYN: He's gone, that's all. It's over.

SAM: Okay. (Pause) Which "over" is it? The major fight about the same crap where he comes back in a week, the almost major fight where he comes back in three days, or the minor fight where he'll be here any minute for the big reconciliation scene. and we won't even get to go to the mall? Come on, A, B, or C?

EVELYN: D.

SAM: D? Hey, come on, you're confusing the routine.

EVELYN: D. Where he doesn't come back at all.

SAM: Oh, yeah, D. I think we did have a D once.

EVELYN: Not like this one. This D stands for "definitely over."

SAM: Evelyn, you've put up with the bastard for ten months. He keeps leaving and coming back like psoriasis. And you keep taking him back. Forgive me if I sound like I don't believe you this time.

EVELYN: You know, I've always had this crazy suspicion that you and Charlie never cared much for each other.

SAM: Yeah. While I'm screaming at him and he's throwing things at me, it's kind of hard to break through all the crap and figure out how we really feel about each other.

EVELYN: Well, that's all over. You are now my life, my first and favorite priority, never to be placed second again. (Lightly) I just hope you can be as entertaining as Charlie was.

SAM. No problem. On Friday nights, after I finish the case of Schlitz, I'll smash the glass instead of wash it. It'll be less time consuming on my part, and you can still have your usual Saturday morning mess to clean up. You'll see, you won't even miss dear Charlie.

EVELYN: "Entertaining" was definitely not the proper word to use.

SAM: How about obnoxious?

EVELYN: That's probably a lot better choice.

SAM (Sudden realization): You really mean it this time, don't you. You really believe he won't be back.

EVELYN: Well, he might come back, thinking it's like all the other times. But he's not staying. Besides, I think this place looks better without the stuffed bear in the corner, don't you? Maybe I'll buy a big fern for that corner.

SAM: Christ, we are talking major, major fight this time, aren't we? Sounds like this was the one I've waited ten months for! Damn it! Last night I wasted my time and money on Friday the 13th Part III in 3D, and I could've been right here experiencing a real thriller.

EVELYN: You would've been bored to tears, actually.

SAM: I doubt it. I love anything that has a good ending. Just think, Evelyn, now you can start life all over again. You can start laughing and smiling and thinking and doing normal things.

EVELYN: As opposed to abnormal things?

SAM: Well, yes. I certainly can't say your life with Charles was normal. Unless you think it's normal to sit around drinking beer, watching television, and going out twice a week to a place that's more of a bar than a restaurant.

EVELYN: Wait a minute. There's nothing wrong with Alex's.

SAM: Evelyn, you're only saying that because you're experiencing a moment of weakness. You're not thinking rationally. The influence of Charles is not yet dim enough. Now. Think of Alex's. Picture it, if you will. There's a huge bar, lots of booze, two cigarette machines, a juke box, a Pac Man game and a Ride the Rodeo game. Aside from that, there's one steak on the "menu," along with a hamburger, spaghetti, and the "special of the day," which is always meatloaf. Oh, and the soup is always beef vegetable because it's made from last week's meatloaf. They're still serving this week's meatloaf.

EVELYN: You're right. I'll never eat there again.

SAM: Oh, but you can still drink there. Like I said, there's lots of booze. (Pause) Oh, shit! (Runs into bedroom)

EVELYN: What now?

SAM (Off): If he took my Pucci, I'll kill him!

EVELYN: Why would he take your cologne, Sam?

SAM (Off): Because he always liked mine better than yours. (Entering) Thank God, it's still there.

EVELYN: I didn't think he would actually steal your cologne.

SAM: That's because it's almost gone. If I stretch it, it might last a week. Why don't we go to Field's this weekend so you can buy me some more?

EVELYN: That stuff is twenty-eight bucks a bottle!

SAM: Oh. Is it? I didn't know. You always bought it for me.

EVELYN: I felt guilty about Charlie using it all the time.

SAM: Really? Well, did you know he also wore my ties and socks whenever he pleased? He would just walk right into my room and *take* them.

EVELYN: Yes, I know. It was very hard not to hear the yelling and screaming.

SAM: But he still did it. Even when you told him to stay out of my room, my possessions, and my life.

EVELYN: I know.

SAM: And when I occasionally got a tie back, it was stained, torn, crumpled, spindled, or mutilated. He destroyed about six of my favorite ties. Did you know that?

EVELYN: No, Sam, I am not buying you six ties.

SAM: And I assume you're not going to replace the socks, either.

EVELYN: No

SAM: Okay. (Pause) I'm hungry.

EVELYN: You're always hungry.

SAM: He also broke my clown vase.

EVELYN: And that Krazy Glue worked beautifully. You can't even tell now.

SAM: I can.

EVELYN: Sam.

SAM: Okay. (Pause at refrigerator) Hey, pickles! I never knew we had pickles! Where did these pickles come from?

EVELYN: They've been here for months.

SAM: Are you kidding? I never knew we kept anything in the refrigerator except beer and liverwurst.

EVELYN: If you look carefully, you might even find ketchup and mustard. (Pause) Sam, why did you stay here all these months, as much as you hated Charlie?

SAM: Because I never hated you.

EVELYN: But, Sam, a person can only take so much. You two were arguing constantly. Almost as much as he and I were.

SAM: Well, I always won.

EVELYN: Well, if you did, you never told Charlie about it.

SAM: Evelyn, I always knew you would come out of your little zombie-like world and find reality again. I mean, shit, reality isn't always coffee and ice cream, but...well, maybe again it is.

EVELYN: You know, Sam, the funny thing is that I didn't even realize how I'd changed. Well, not until the past couple of months, anyway. I'd done some thinking about the situation before the big thing with Charlie last night, but I wasn't sure. Then it hit me. Last night, that old light bulb finally came on.

SAM: You started thinking about what a shit Charles was five weeks ago when Edward started asking you out.

EVELYN: Sam, Ed has nothing to do with Charlie.

SAM: Okay. (Pause) Then what I still don't understand, Evelyn, is what exactly it was that made that old proverbial light bulb illuminate your clouded mind. What made last night's fight any different from the others?

EVELYN: We didn't even fight, as a matter of fact.

SAM: Didn't fight.

EVELYN: Didn't fight.

SAM: Then you had a major "disagreement."

EVELYN: Yes, a "disagreement."

SAM: Ah ha! It must've been a helluva disagreement! Look, Ev, I don't know why, but something tells me you're not ready to spill your guts to ole Sam yet. And you know what? Ole Sam doesn't care. Ole "Tell me everything, it might make a great play" Sam doesn't give a damn! The incredible thing is that it's over! It's all over! And you and I are just like before—it's just us again. In fact, don't tell me anything about last night until four years from this date. Then we'll both just sit back and laugh ourselves sick. Okay?

EVELYN: Okay.

SAM: Then we'll see if it makes a great play.

EVELYN: Okay.

SAM: You really don't want to talk about it, right?

EVELYN: Right.

SAM: Evelyn, I know you, and I know that if you don't tell me about this "major disagreement" you'll feel totally awful. You'll just keep it all inside and make yourself miserable. I am your best friend. A person needs to tell his or her best friend everything. So. Tell me all about it.

EVELYN (Pause): Sam, do you remember a couple of years ago when you took a week off and went to Utah with those friends of yours?

SAM: *What* friends?

EVELYN: Okay. Those *ex*-friends of yours.

SAM: Oh, yeah, *those* people.

EVELYN: You wouldn't tell me about your horrible vacation until a week later because it was too fresh—it still bothered you too much. Remember?

SAM: Uh huh.

EVELYN: And then when you did talk about it, it was so funny because the entire thing seemed like such a farce. Remember?

SAM: Uh huh.

EVELYN: If you had told me about it immediately after you got back, it would've just gotten you upset again. Like when the one guy fixed you up with the blind date who couldn't speak English. Remember?

SAM: Uh huh.

EVELYN: Okay. Now do you understand what I'm trying to say?

SAM: Yeah. We'll talk about it in a week.

EVELYN (Pause): Sam, you have a fantastic grasp of your own reality; however, everyone else's seems to confuse you. (Pause) What I'm saying is: I'll tell you about it—every word—when I'm damned well ready.

SAM: Okay. Why didn't you just say so?

EVELYN: Because sometimes you don't understand things when they're phrased simply. You need analogies, startling statements, direct quotations, or visual aids.

SAM: And I seem to be in an analogical mood now?

EVELYN: I thought so. I guess I was wrong. You're the only person I know who has fifty-seven distinct varieties of thoughtful moods.

SAM: Actually, I'm not even in a thoughtful mood. I'm in a very deep party mood. Hey, I know! After rehearsal, let's have a couple of drinks, come home, make a huge dinner—

EVELYN: Vegetarian, of course.

SAM: Of course. Then, we can go see "Invasion of the Space Nomads" and "Killer Clones"—It's a double feature at the Empire.

EVELYN: And both in 3D.

SAM: Of course. Then we can go to the Outer Spirits and get smashed. Just like old times. What do you say?

EVELYN: We have rehearsal tomorrow.

SAM: Okay. Then we'll not get smashed, we'll just drink.

EVELYN: I just don't know how I've been getting along without 3D in my life. For some reason, Charlie never wanted to see those movies.

SAM: He couldn't understand them; they were over his head.

EVELYN: I suppose you're right. (Laughs) You probably *are* right.

SAM: Some are very complicated, you know.

EVELYN: Yeah. (Laughs) Oh, I forget to tell you. Joan and Lewis are working on setting up that banquet, but tickets'll probably be expensive. (Checks notes) They said the best deal so far is about twenty dollars per person. What do you think? Do you think people will pay that much?

SAM: Sure. Are you kidding? With what we pay them?

EVELYN: That's what I was afraid of.

SAM: No, really. It's only once a year. Last year it was seventeen dollars. Inflation exists even in the theatre. Why, just yesterday it cost me forty-five cents for a Snicker's bar.

EVELYN: How much were they before?

SAM: Evelyn, don't you know anything about the price of chocolate? Lunch has *never* cost me more than thirty-five cents.

EVELYN: Oh, and...as of now, audition dates for *Shadow Box* are August 14-16. We'll audition Equity on the 14th, non-Equity on the 15th, and post callbacks for the 16th, okay?

SAM: Sure. I'll be there. I'm great moral support.

EVELYN: That's why I want you there. We're short on leading females this season.

SAM: Why don't *you* audition them? And *I'll* direct.

EVELYN: Because, stupid, you'll just be finishing up with *God's Favorite*, and you'll need the rest.

SAM: Thank you twice, Evelyn.

EVELYN: For calling you "stupid"?

SAM: No, I ignored that. Thanks *first* for recognizing what a tremendously exhausting endeavor *God's Favorite* will be for me, and thanks *second* for not telling me what a ridiculous statement I made by inferring that I am creatively capable of directing *The Shadow Box*.

EVELYN: You're welcome. Besides, I think you could.

SAM: No. Comedy is my life; drama is yours. (Pause) However, you do comedy just as well as I do, while I totally suck at anything dramatic. (Mock despair) Oh, Evelyn, why do you even keep me around?

EVELYN: Because you own the half of the theatre that I don't own.

SAM: Oh, yeah. That's a good reason.

EVELYN: And because I *don't* do comedy as well as you, and because you're the best friend anyone could ever have.

SAM: Don't get sentimental, Evelyn. I can't stand it.

EVELYN: Neither could George S. Kaufman.

SAM: Right. Ole George and I have a lot in common. Except *his* plays made Broadway.

EVELYN: Sam. Don't start. Listen, you are a wonderful playwright, and you know it. It takes time to sell material, and you also know that. Just wait. Leo's pushing for you as hard as he can. You'll hear something soon.

SAM: Yeah. The usual something is just what I don't want to hear. Want some banana and fudge marble ice cream?

EVELYN: No. It sounds awful. I don't know how you can eat that crap all the time, especially at the crack of dawn. Don't you know that stuff has helped to make half of America fat?

SAM: Is that why I've put on two pounds this last year! Christ, and I thought I was still a growing boy.

EVELYN: Sam, dear...

SAM: Don't tell me I'm being catty.

EVELYN: Okay.

SAM: Isn't that what you were going to say?

EVELYN: No.

SAM: Then, what?

EVELYN: I was just going to offer you a saucer of milk.

SAM: Sometimes I am so naive. (Leadingly) But, you know, maybe you're right.

EVELYN: About what?

SAM: Maybe I should take up running.

EVELYN: Or, stop eating so much of that crap.

SAM (Ignoring this): In fact, I saw this great pair of running shoes in the mall. . .

EVELYN: Oh, no.

SAM: Listen, tell you what. If I sell my play, you can get me those shoes as a congratulatory gift. And—if I don't sell it, you can buy them for me as a consolation gift. You know—to make me feel better after I stop crying.

EVELYN: No.

SAM: Please?

EVELYN: No. I'm forever falling over shoes now. Wherever I go, I trip on a red one or a yellow one falls in my face from God knows where. I cannot take any more shoes.

SAM: Please?

EVELYN: No. Absolutely not.

SAM: Okay.

EVELYN (Pause): Okay? That's all?

SAM: That's all.

EVELYN: Okay. (Pause) Okay.

SAM: Besides, I'm already getting casual shoes today, remember?

EVELYN: I know. I'm trying to think of a way to stop you.

SAM: You'll love them. I already know which pair I want, and they're gorgeous. Hey, why wait until tonight to party? Let's begin celebrating the final exit of Charles Evans right now. Let's go to the mall, then have a celebration lunch at The Weed House.

EVELYN: You know I can't stand vegetarian crap. Besides, we have rehearsal at noon, remember?

SAM: But it's only 8:57.

EVELYN: You know it takes me two hours to get dressed. Then we'll have one rushed hour to get to the mall, buy shoes, and get to rehearsal on time. (Crosses toward bedroom)

SAM: What are you doing?

EVELYN: Making use of a three-minute head start.

Lights fade.

End Scene I

SCENE II

Three days later, about 7:00 p.m. Lights up on the same livingroom. CHARLIE sits alone on chair, uncomfortable. He is about 40, fairly attractive, but more striking than anything. He is a man used to having "his way," and that should be evident early on. He is dressed casually, and checks his watch occasionally, growing more and more irritated and uncomfortable. Then, SAM opens front door with grocery bags in each arm. He skillfully manages to shut the door by "bumping" it closed. He hums or sings all the while "Girl, You're a Woman," from *Best Little Whorehouse in Texas*, stops, sees CHARLIE, continues on to bar area to sit bags down and unpack them.

SAM: Oh. *You're* here.

CHARLIE: Once again.

SAM: Already.

CHARLIE: Where's Evelyn?

SAM: Next door.

CHARLIE (pause): Well, is she coming up?

SAM: I suppose so. When she's ready.

CHARLIE: What does that mean?

SAM: She's been making up her own mind about things lately.

CHARLIE: Oh, I see. As opposed to the way it is with me around.

SAM: Yes, as opposed to the way it *was* when you were around.

CHARLIE (chuckles): Right.

SAM: I hope you're not staying long. Evelyn and I have our evening all planned and we didn't leave time in it for you.

CHARLIE: As usual, direct and to the point.

SAM: Yes. I don't see any room for screwing around. I mean, living life should be the same as writing a play about life. However, plays are much more precise because they cut out all the bullshit.

CHARLIE: You're still seeing yourself as an up and coming playwright, aren't you?

SAM: No. You see, there's a major difference between you and me. You want what you want *now*. I sit around and wait awhile and if whatever it is doesn't work out, I go on to something else.

CHARLIE: Then why didn't you "go on to something else" six months ago when you saw how serious Evelyn and I were?

SAM: Because I knew it was only a matter of time.

CHARLIE: Until what?

SAM (Sarcastic): Until what, he asks. Until Evelyn realized what a shit you were and got rid of you. I hope you're here to drop off the front door key for the last time.

CHARLIE: I need to talk to Evelyn. Then, if she still wants me to leave, I will.

SAM: Oh, I see. More bullshit first.

CHARLIE: No! No bullshit. I just need to talk to her. (Crosses to door. Looks out.) Where the hell is she?

SAM: What's wrong? Bored with my company?

CHARLIE: I've always been bored with your company.

SAM: That's true, you have. But don't worry, I'll get over it. I'd offer you some peanut butter and strawberry crunch ice cream, but since you're not staying long, I won't.

CHARLIE: She did come home with you, right?

SAM: We left the office, went grocery shopping, then came straight home together. Evelyn wanted to work later, but I said "No," which I'm now beginning to regret. She'll be up in a minute. She went next door to the Pic-N-Pay to buy some walnuts.

CHARLIE: But you just went grocery shopping.

SAM: And forgot walnuts.

CHARLIE: Ummm.

SAM: Yes, we're always forgetting something.

CHARLIE: Still trying to read my mind?

SAM: It doesn't take much. And I don't want to fight today. All the good fights have already been fought.

CHARLIE: I'm not here to fight, Sam.

SAM: Of course you are. You're here to fight with me, then with Evelyn. You thrive on a good fight.

CHARLIE: I don't like fighting.

SAM: You're not happy unless you're fighting.

CHARLIE: Damn it! Won't you ever drop a subject?

SAM: Sometimes. (Pause) I just don't understand why you want to fight the same old fights.

CHARLIE: Give yourself some credit here. You always come up with something original to fight about.

SAM: There's no such thing as originality, only creativity. And fighting with you is far from being creative.

CHARLIE: You're afraid of losing, aren't you? You're afraid Evelyn might take me back, and that would ruin your damned little party.

SAM: No, Charles, I am not afraid. I am also no longer amused.

CHARLIE: Amused. (Laughs) I amuse you?

SAM: Once, but not anymore. You know, I once wrote a play about you. It was *all* true, everything in it was things you've said and done at one time or another. I called it *The Son of a Bitch Returns*, but I ended up throwing it out because the entire thing was terribly trite.

(CHARLIE is very upset, finally. After a moment, he very calmly crosses to SAM and pulls a ring box out of his pocket. He opens it revealing a large, flashy diamond engagement ring. SAM is finally put off his guard, and reacts, very upset. SAM turns away with a killing glance at CHARLIE. CHARLIE slightly laughs; he's won, puts the ring away, AS: the front door opens and EVELYN enters with small grocery bag. EVELYN sees the two and picks up on the tension. It's never been this bad before.)

SAM: Charlie just stopped by for a minute, but he's got to be going. He brought back our spare front door key.

EVELYN (to CHARLIE): You shouldn't have bothered. I was going to have the locks changed tomorrow.

CHARLIE: I'd like to talk to you, Ev.

EVELYN: Okay. We're cooking vegetarian tonight, so make it quick.

CHARLIE: Alone, Evelyn.

EVELYN: We are alone.

CHARLIE: The two of us, not the three of us.

EVELYN: Oh. Sam, do you want to leave?

SAM: No.

EVELYN (to CHARLIE): He doesn't want to leave.

CHARLIE: Of course not. He's afraid we'll patch things up.

EVELYN: No, I think he knows better than that.

CHARLIE: Damn it! Evelyn, could we leave for a few minutes?

EVELYN: No.

CHARLIE: Why not, for God's sake?

EVELYN: Because it's rude, I've things to do, and I don't want to talk to you.

SAM: That pretty well covers it. (Crosses to door, opens it.) Thanks for stopping by.

CHARLIE: Will you shut up?! (Pause) Look, will you please leave? For ten minutes?

CHARLIE: Nope. I want to see what happens when you show her the ring.

CHARLIE: Oh, for Chrissakes! (EVELYN turns, CHARLIE pulls out the ring, glares at SAM, flashes the ring before EVELYN. Both men watch her intently, but no reaction from EVELYN.)

EVELYN: I told you the other night, I'm not interested.

(SAM reacts, confused, shocked.)

CHARLIE: I thought maybe with this you'd realize I was serious.

EVELYN: After ten months, you think I don't know when you're serious?

CHARLIE: Christ, Ev. . .

SAM: Wait a minute! (to EVELYN) You mean, he asked you to *marry* him the other night, and you told him to get lost?

EVELYN: Basically.

CHARLIE: Damn it! Can't we even talk for five minutes alone? (Pause) I tried all day to get you at the theatre. I was even going to make a damned appointment to see you. But you weren't "in" all day. (Pause) Aren't you going to tell me you weren't "in" all day?

EVELYN: No.

CHARLIE (Pause): You were in.

EVELYN: Yes. All day.

CHARLIE: Well, why the hell wouldn't you talk to me?

EVELYN: Because Sam and I were tied up in design meetings most of the day. And because I had a good day and didn't feel like talking to you.

CHARLIE: I don't give a damn about your "good day!"

SAM: I'm glad you had a good day, Evelyn.

EVELYN: Thank you, Sam.

SAM: I had a good day, too.

EVELYN: I'm glad.

CHARLIE: Christ! Please, Ev, five minutes. Just give me a chance to find out what I did wrong.

EVELYN: You know what you did wrong.

CHARLIE: Will you please tell him to leave?

EVELYN: He lives here.

CHARLIE (to SAM): Will you please leave?

SAM: I live here.

(Pause. CHARLIE turns away.)

EVELYN: I'd invite you to stay for dinner, but it's kind of a celebration dinner for Sam, and I don't think he'd like for you to stay.

CHARLIE (turns): But you'd like for me to?

EVELYN: No. Actually, I don't. I was either trying to be polite or trying to break the tension.

CHARLIE: Oh. And you don't want to talk.

EVELYN: No.

CHARLIE: I see. Maybe tomorrow then?

EVELYN (tired of this): No, not tomorrow, either. Listen, Charlie, we had a good ten months together. Well, actually, we had a few good moments in the last ten months together. But the good moments were certainly not worth all the crap in between. I'm tired, Charlie. I'm not going to live the way you want me to anymore.

CHARLIE: Oh, is that what you two are celebrating tonight? "Evelyn's rebirth"?

EVELYN: No. Actually, it's Sam occasion. He sold his first play today.

CHARLIE (Sarcastic): You're kidding!

SAM: Nope. It's called *The Man Who Thought He Ruled*. And, look, Evelyn bought me a new pair of shoes, too! (Takes pair of brightly-colored running shoes out of box.)

CHARLIE: Where in the hell are you going to wear those hideous things?

SAM: Wherever I please. I've always done whatever I please. Just like Evelyn's doing now.

CHARLIE: Listen, you inconsiderate son of a bitch. . .

SAM: If you two will excuse me, I think I'll go into the kitchen and start dinner. (SAM exits into kitchen and, during the following, places himself right near the cut-out window in the kitchen, obviously in order not to miss anything.)

CHARLIE: Thank God. Evelyn, we have to talk about it.

EVELYN: Charlie, we talked about it three days ago. There's nothing more to talk about.

CHARLIE: Evelyn, I miss you. I want to come back. (SAM begins chopping onions)

EVELYN: Not this time, Charlie. (SAM is quieter now)

CHARLIE: Look, I know we have some problems, but we've always worked them out. You still have two months to think about my proposition. I think you made up your mind too soon, Evelyn. You've not thought it all out.

EVELYN: Yes, I have, Charlie. "No" is still my answer, and it will be the same two months from now. Or ten months from now.

CHARLIE: I'm not sure of that; I don't see how you could be. (Pause) Listen, if you let me move back in, I'll even try to get along better with that little bastard. (SAM feigns a coughing attack)

CHARLIE: Evelyn, do you think we could cover that window with something? (We hear a "bang" as SAM drops knife)

SAM (Entering from kitchen): Evelyn, I am going to clean my room, since I have some time before dinner, and since I'm not allowed in the kitchen to cook it. So, may I use your room to put some of my things in just while I vacuum?

EVELYN: Of course, Sam. The vacuum is in my closet.

SAM: Thank you. (Exits into his room.)

CHARLIE: Ev, why don't we try it like before. I won't even mention marriage or... anything.

(SAM walks across hallway to EVELYN's bedroom, carrying a vase with peacock feathers—Glares at CHARLIE in passing.)

EVELYN: Because I don't want it to be like it was. I want to have some fun. I want to go to the movies and go dancing. And I want to eat out somewhere other than Alex's.

(SAM crosses back into his room; smiles towards CHARLIE in passing)

CHARLIE: We'll do anything you want.

EVELYN: Come on, I know you better than that, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Ev, we've been happy. There's no reason to call it quits now. It's not the same as if we've stopped caring about each other.

EVELYN: I'm not so sure about that, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Not so sure?

EVELYN: No. I don't really know how I feel about you now. (Pause) Charlie, you left here three days ago, and I haven't even missed you. Oh, I knew you were gone; I knew something was different, but instead of feeling sad or upset or as if I'd lost something very important to me, I've felt relieved, happy.

CHARLIE: Oh, come on, Ev, you're just going through that "independent woman" phase again. You know you can do whatever you want; I wouldn't stand in your way.

(SAM crosses into EVELYN's room again with a huge, almost life-size clown and says "ha!" Stops for a beat, clears throat, and continues.)

CHARLIE: What in the hell is the matter with him today? He's even worse than usual!

EVELYN: He's just afraid, that's all. He thinks I might reconsider my decision.

CHARLIE: Which decision is that?

EVELYN: That you are not moving back in here.

CHARLIE (pause): Okay. Fine. I guess I finally get the message, Evelyn. (pause) How about if I move in somewhere close by and we'll just start over again. (Disgustedly) I'll call, make dates, pick you up for dinner...

(SAM noisily drags vacuum cleaner through hallway into his room, humming "I Am Woman.")

CHARLIE (Shouts to SAM): Will you shut the hell up!

EVELYN: I see you're already trying to get along better with Sam.

CHARLIE: Look, he's got to try to get along better with me, too.

EVELYN: Oh, I see. Now you want to decide what Sam should do as well.

CHARLIE: All I want is to try again...

(The following is to be delivered quickly, perhaps slightly overlapped, while the noise of the vacuum cleaner is heard in the background.)

EVELYN: No, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Won't he ever shut up!

EVELYN: I want to do things on my own for awhile.

CHARLIE: How can you live with that jerk!

EVELYN: Did you hear me?

CHARLIE: Let's please leave for awhile.

EVELYN: Just *me* for awhile!

CHARLIE: Did you hear what I said?

EVELYN: I want to be left alone!

(All shouting stops, as does vacuum cleaner. Pause. CHARLIE turns away, EVELYN looks down, SAM enters into hallway, dragging vacuum behind him.)

SAM: I hope I'm not disturbing the two of you with this noisy vacuum.

CHARLIE: Listen, you son of a bitch, you can do whatever you want, but I'm not leaving here until Evelyn gives me some answers!

SAM: He won't leave, Evelyn.

EVELYN: Sam, I think you were right. We need that pistaschio/fudge marble ice cream for dessert.

SAM: Well, it's too late now.

EVELYN: Why don't you run down to Bressler's and pick some up.

SAM: But I just stopped at Bressler's this afternoon to order my birthday cake for next Saturday. I'll feel really stupid going back so soon. Wait. You're trying to get rid of me, aren't you?

EVELYN: Just for ten minutes.

SAM: Even you. I live here, remember?

EVELYN: We've already established that.

SAM: I thought you forgot. (Sighs) All right. I'll go get the ice cream. I'll be back in five minutes.

EVELYN: Ten.

SAM: But it'll only take me five minutes.

EVELYN: Ten.

SAM: All right. I'll get the ice cream and stand outside in the rain with it melting all over me.

EVELYN: It's not raining.

SAM: It might be. No one can predict the weather, Evelyn. (To CHARLIE) I may be small, but I'm brave. If she starts screaming, you're done for. (Grand exit)

CHARLIE: How the hell you can put up with that squirt is beyond me.

EVELYN: Is that meant to insult Sam or me?

CHARLIE: Ev...

EVELYN: I'm through with being insulted, Charlie. If that's all you're here for tonight, then leave right now.

CHARLIE: For Chrissakes, Ev, I didn't insult you...

EVELYN: An insult to Sam is an insult to me, but that's something else you never realized because you never cared enough to.

CHARLIE: My God, Evelyn, I'm not here to insult anyone. I just asked you to marry me.

EVELYN: And I said "No."

CHARLIE (pause): You knew about the kids, Ev. You've know all along.

EVELYN: The kids are only part of it, Charlie.

CHARLIE: Then tell me, tell me what in the hell happened to make you act this way?

EVELYN: What you want and what I want are two different things. You want to get married and settle down with a nice eight room house, a dog, and two half-grown kids that you're suddenly getting custody of. What I want is my theatre company that Sam and I have worked hard to build up. And I want to stay here. With Sam.

CHARLIE: Ev...

EVELYN (Pause): When you were married, you were away weekends a lot just like you are now. You played around, had a good time, and met me. You divorced the good little wife who let you get away. And now you say it's my turn to sit with the kids while you start it all over again. And I say "No."

CHARLIE: So, that's how you see it.

EVELYN: That's how it is.

CHARLIE: Uh huh. And Sam has nothing to do with it.

EVELYN: Of course he does. (Pause) Charlie, what I want is right here. What you want is in St. Louis. Find some nice girl who wants nothing more in life than to please her man and take care of a nice house and two kids. That's not for me. Charlie, we've never loved each other enough to go through a change like that together.

CHARLIE: Evelyn, I think it's time you realized that Sam has nothing to do with you and me.

EVELYN (Pause): Charlie, three months ago, you were fifty miles away on one of your weekend sales trips. And at the same time, Sam was 150 miles away trying to sign on an actor we wanted. I felt terrible that Saturday night, really lonely and depressed, and I needed to talk to someone who cared about me. So, I called you. You were tired, not very comforting, and barely heard a word I said. We hung up five minutes later, and I felt more lonely than ever. Then I called Sam, who was also tired and had had an uneventful day. But, three minutes into the conversation, he asked me if I wanted him to come home. I said, "No," and we talked for two hours, Charlie. I talked for two hours, long distance, to a man I generally see every day. (Pause) Later, you complained about the huge phone bill, a phone bill which Sam and I pay! (Pause) Now you tell me where my loyalties should lie!

CHARLIE: Evelyn...come on, I was tired, I was...Evelyn, that was only one little episode.

EVELYN: That's right. That's only *one* episode.

CHARLIE (Pause): You mean you're basing the strength of our relationship on something like that?

EVELYN: If you don't understand, Charlie, then there's nothing else I can say. (Pause) Sam knows me better than you ever would, Charlie, because he's taken the time to get to know me.

CHARLIE: You can't let that asshole come between us...

EVELYN: You can call Sam whatever you want, I don't care. But I'll tell you one thing about Sam: He doesn't walk out after a fight and come back later when he realizes he might be losing a good thing. (Pause) Now. Why don't you leave before Sam gets back. I'm sure it'll save you some unpleasantness.

CHARLIE: Then that's it.

EVELYN: That's it.

CHARLIE: Just like that.

EVELYN: Just like that.

(SAM enters with brown bag.)

SAM (to CHARLIE): I waited twelve minutes, and you're still here.

EVELYN: Charlie was just leaving.

SAM (crossing into kitchen): Okay. Please close the door on your way out. (Exits)

CHARLIE: Can I call you in a few days?

EVELYN: No.

(SAM reenters)

SAM (to CHARLIE): I just saw Happy Joe, our friendly neighborhood policeman, on the corner, and I told him that if I walk to the window and scream, he's to come up here with his club and handcuffs and take you in for disturbing the peace of this household. So, I'd advise you to leave immediately.

CHARLIE: I'm leaving because I'm through here, *not* because of your asinine threats.

SAM: Of course not. So leave.

CHARLIE: Well, Evelyn, the offer's still open, remember that.

SAM (at window): Happy Joe! Happy Joe!

(CHARLIE lunges at SAM, grabs his shirt, pulls him out of window.)

CHARLIE: That's it, boy. That's all I'm going to hear from you today.

EVELYN: Let him go, Charlie. (CHARLIE lets go of SAM). Now. Get the hell out.

CHARLIE: All right! All right! I'm leaving! (At door, to EVELYN) Listen, I'll leave you alone for one week, then I'll give you a call.

EVELYN: Don't bother, Charlie, I won't be in.

CHARLIE: Better yet, I'll come to see you at the theatre. A week should give you enough time to get sick of this jerk! One week. And if you won't talk to me, I'll walk right into your office! (To SAM) And you are not going to interfere!

SAM (incredulously): Moi?

(CHARLIE storms out. Pause.)

SAM: What are you going to do when he walks into your office?

EVELYN: Call Happy Joe, probably.

SAM: Good for you! Oh, Evelyn, I'm so proud of you. You stood your ground and let him have it without any screaming and yelling. It was so subdued I couldn't hear a word.

EVELYN: What do you mean?

SAM: I stood under the window and listened for seven minutes.

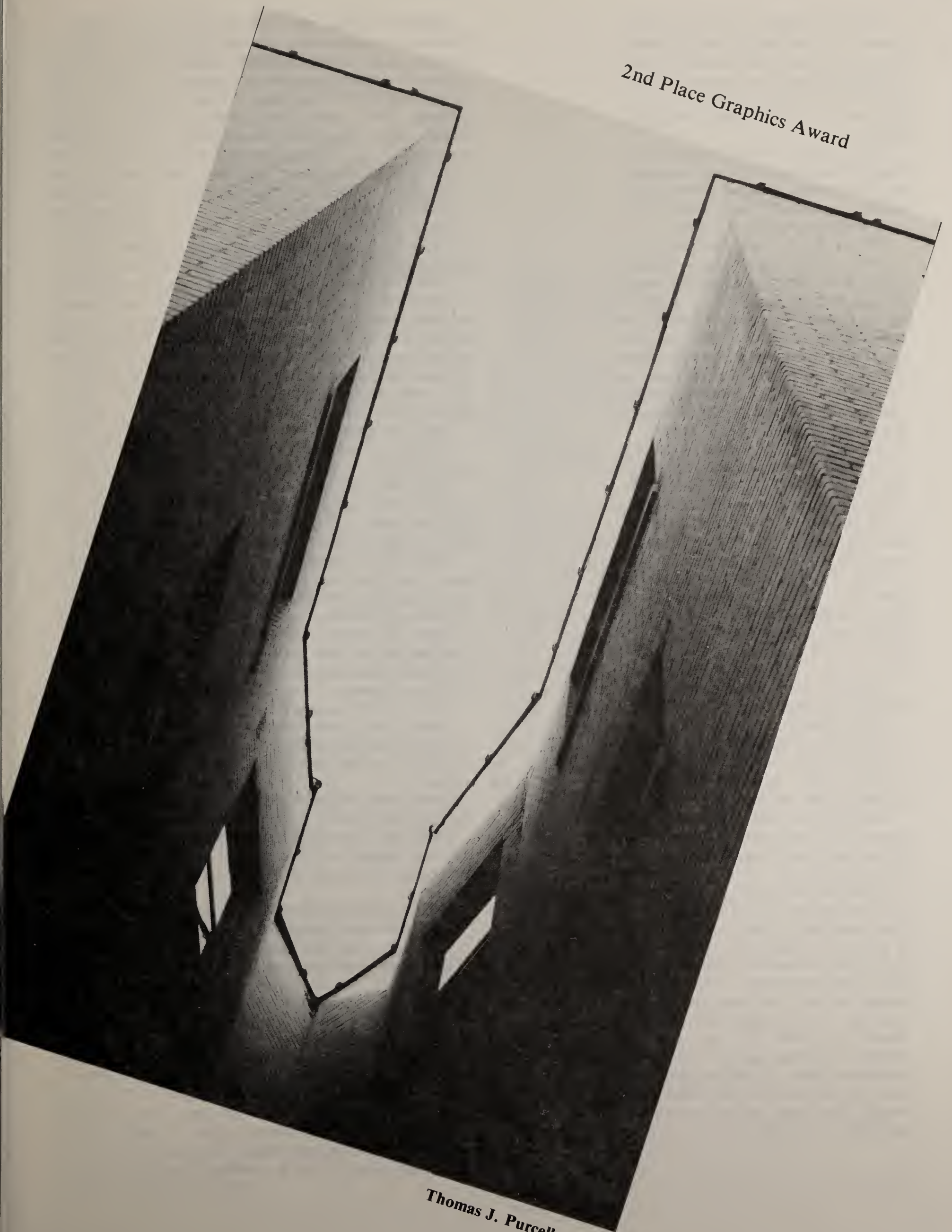
EVELYN: I thought so.

SAM: Why?

EVELYN: Because you stayed away for twelve minutes, and it only takes you five to go to Bressler's and back.

SAM: Oh. (Pause)

2nd Place Graphics Award



Thomas J. Purcell

EVELYN: Sam, you've been right about so many things. And I always know you're right. It's just that I have to learn the hard way, I guess. I try to pretend that I know what I'm doing, but, well...I just get lonely and confused.

SAM: The only time you get confused, Evelyn, is when it concerns men. Aside from men, you are always level-headed, competent, and strong. But your weakness is men. All men.

EVELYN: Oh, come on, Sam.

SAM: Well, most men. (Pause) Some men. (Pause) Attractive men. Evelyn, I know that you get lonely a lot, you know, for a relationship, a romantic involvement. But I just wish you'd pick men that I can get along with. You know, someone like me.

EVELYN: Are you kidding? Sometimes I can't handle one of you. I don't know what I'd do with two of you.

(Note: the following is done seriously.)

SAM: You see, Evelyn, you just don't know how to pick men. You pick the good-looking men who are twits.

EVELYN: You're definitely right there. What I need is a good-looking man who is not a wit.

SAM: Impossible. All good-looking men are twits because they know they're good-looking. It's like a magic trick, Evelyn. The day that they realize they're good-looking, poof, they wit out.

EVELYN: I see. Then you're saying that I'm attracted to twits.

SAM: Exactly.

EVELYN: Then that explains why most men have made me unhappy.

SAM: Yep. A wit can't make anyone happy but himself.

EVELYN: Uh huh. Well, Sam, you know, Terry has told me a number of times how attractive you are. Does that make you a wit, too?

SAM: Of course not. I don't think I'm attractive, it's just that everyone else does. Now. There's an example of a good relationship. Terry and I see each other a couple of times a week. We respect each other's independence, which is why we could never live together. And, when we do see each other, it's great. We go dancing, dining, drinking, to the movies, or whatever. Now, if we lived together, we'd be bored with each other in a week. This way, we can go on for another two to ten years.

EVELYN: Also, you love parties, French and vegetarian cuisine, 3D movies, and theatre. Terry loves reading, watching *Laverne and Shirley* reruns, Suzie Q's and Burger King cuisine. Terry also *hates* theatre. That's why you could never live together.

SAM: That, too.

(Pause)

EVELYN: Sam...

SAM: What.

EVELYN (Pause): He wanted me to sell my part of the theatre.

SAM: He what?!

EVELYN: Yep. That's what he wanted. (Pause) Can you imagine? *He* might think he's worth my giving up what I worked eight years for, but I certainly don't. (Beat) Can you believe it? I mean, the son of a bitch actually wanted me to sell my half.

SAM: To whom?

EVELYN: You. Or whoever else would buy it.

SAM: But, Ev, the only reason it works is because of both of us. I do half the work, you do half the work, and we both do the rest of it.

EVELYN: I know. That, by the way, was part of his argument—I spend too much time at the theatre and not enough with him.

SAM: Of course. It's much more fulfilling to sit here every night and watch the fights and drink beer than it is to run a theatre.

EVELYN: Or associate with you.

SAM: Or...wait a minute. Or associate with me? Me?

EVELYN: That was a strong implication.

SAM: What do you mean? A strong implication of what?

EVELYN: Sam, Charlie wanted me to, very simply, sell my part of the theatre and move to St. Louis with him.

SAM: And marry him?

EVELYN: And marry him.

SAM: And leave me here?

EVELYN: And leave you here.

(Pause)

SAM: That jealousy's a funny thing, you know.

EVELYN: I know.

SAM: Imagine! That stupid, inconsiderate son of a bitch! What the fuck were you supposed to do in fucking St. Louis? Sit around the house all day watching soap operas and eating bonbons with pink sponge curlers in your hair? Shit, you'd be fat in a week.

EVELYN: Sam.

SAM: I can just see you now—standing on a ladder at the side of a white house—scrubbing the windows behind the little flower boxes full of petunias, wondering what in the hell is happening with theatre these days. And where is good ole Sam these days, and I wonder what he's up to. Christ, he could've turned into a junkie or an alcoholic or...

EVELYN: Sam.

SAM: And if you ever dared ask him to take you to the theatre for an "evening out," he'd take you to some damned ball game instead, because, of course, you could get a lot more out of some damned ball flying from one end of the field to the other.

EVELYN: Sam.

SAM: And then... what in the hell is in St. Louis, anyway?

EVELYN: His kids.

SAM: His kids?

EVELYN: His kids.

SAM: I see. And just how many of these offspring does he have?

EVELYN: Two.

SAM: Of what age and gender?

EVELYN: Eight years, masculine; five years, feminine.

SAM: Oh. And just where did these "kids" come from?

EVELYN: Now, really, Sam.

SAM: Well?

EVELYN (signs): They've always been there. I knew. I just forgot.

SAM: Forgot?

EVELYN: Well, I was successful in putting it out of my mind for awhile. But now he's getting custody of both kids *and* the white house.

SAM: Uh huh. I see. And why wasn't I informed about this?

EVELYN: Because Charlie wanted me to tell you.

SAM: Oh. (Pause) That doesn't make sense, Evelyn.

EVELYN: Sure it does. Charlie's purpose for telling *me* was so that I'd tell you and you'd get mad about my keeping him around anyway and leave.

SAM: He never knew me at all. (Pause) Do you think that's a good name for a play—*He Never Knew Me at All*?

EVELYN: It stinks.

SAM: I thought so.

EVELYN: Besides, I think it's already a song.

SAM: Figures.

EVELYN (Pause): I just didn't want any more fighting, that's all.

SAM: I understand that.

EVELYN: I thought you would.

SAM: But I don't like it.

EVELYN: I didn't think you would.

(Pause)

SAM: Evelyn, what would you have done if Charles had decided to sell the white house and bring the kids here?

EVELYN: The same thing I did the other day.

SAM: Really?

EVELYN: Do I look like a mother to you?

SAM: No. And I love it! I am so damned glad.

EVELYN: Besides, I've never loved Charlie enough to take on an old responsibility of his. I figured the day would come when I'd have to face the kids problem.

SAM: And you faced it and handled it well.

EVELYN: Charlie doesn't think so, I'm sure.

SAM: That's because he doesn't benefit from it like I do.

EVELYN: That's true. Come on, let's make dinner. We have to get to the show on time.

SAM: Evelyn, he's really not coming back, is he?

EVELYN: No, Sam, he's not coming back. You have just witnessed *the* final exit of Charles Evans.

SAM: And he forgot to leave the front door key.

EVELYN: Don't worry. The locks will be changed tomorrow afternoon.

SAM: Don't forget to give me a key.

EVELYN: I won't.

SAM (Pause): Will you miss him?

EVELYN: No. Now I have me all to myself again.

SAM: Good. Come on, let's make dinner. We have to get to the show on time.

END SCENE II

SCENE III

Lights up on same livingroom. We hear SAM and EVELYN approaching from the hallway. They seem to be arguing, but the words have to be distinguishable. The following dialogue begins once the door to the apartment has been opened.

SAM: I don't wish to discuss it, Evelyn!

EVELYN: But you brought it up!

SAM: Initially. But now I don't want to discuss it:

EVELYN: Sam, what the hell is the matter with you? Ed and I have only been dating casually. I'm being very careful this time.

SAM: Ha!

EVELYN: What do you mean, "Ha!"

SAM: What does "Ha!" ever mean, Evelyn? It means that the statement that you just made is false, absurd, unrealistic, ridiculous...

EVELYN: Sam, Ed is a nice man. He takes me out to eat at *nice* places. No more Alex's.

SAM: But he takes you out to eat every night, Evelyn. Don't tell me you're "dating casually" when you were with him six nights out of seven last week. You only stayed home Wednesday so you could rest up for Thursday, Friday, and Saturday.

EVELYN: I'm sick of this, Sam. I am sick and tired of your hating every man I go out with.

SAM: That's not true. I liked Theodore.

EVELYN: That's because he lived in Utah. I saw Ted once a month when he was in town on business.

SAM: Besides, Edward is too much like Charles.

EVELYN: Sam, he is not!

SAM: In fact, he is just like Charles. In fact, if you add about fifteen pounds, take away the moustache, and replace the Scotch with Schlitz, you've got Charles.

EVELYN: Sam, come on, they're nothing alike. Well...a little. They both wear the same cologne, they both dress...

SAM: Pucci!? He wears Pucci, too!? No. This can't be. I'll have to change brands of cologne. I'll have to wear some God-awful strong-smelling, sweet stuff in order to keep *your* men out of it.

EVELYN: Ed is not even "in" your cologne! Why the hell are you already talking about him like this!

SAM: Already! See! Already, she says. Already. That sounds like foreshadowing to me, Evelyn.

EVELYN: Well, it's not. And stop reading into everything I say!

SAM: All right, fine. (Pause) It's just that subtlety is not a trait that you possess.

EVELYN: Christ! Sam, look, I'm just having a good time. Ed is not a man that I could ever get emotionally involved with.

SAM: How about live with?

EVELYN: No!

SAM: Okay.

(Long pause)

SAM: I bought you a present today when I went out to lunch, Evelyn. (Hands her gift-wrapped box)

EVELYN: Oh, Sam. That's really sweet.

SAM: I know. I couldn't decide what to get you, but when I saw this, I knew you just had to have it.

EVELYN (Opens box, It's a big coffee mug): Oh, this is really nice Sam. It's...a little bigger than most, isn't it?

SAM: Yeah. I thought you could add it to your mug collection here instead of taking it to work. It is a little big to sit on a desk.

EVELYN: Sam, why is there a cactus on the side of the mug saying, "It starts my day off right"?

SAM: Turn it around.

EVELYN: Oh. Sam, why is this person saying "It starts my day off right" with a watering can in his hand?

SAM: Look in the box. You didn't see the rest of the mug.

EVELYN (Takes out a snap-on spout, snaps it onto mug): Sam, what is this?

SAM: See? Don't you love it? Now, look on the bottom.

EVELYN: I'm afraid to.

SAM: Go on. It's inscribed.

EVELYN (looks): TO EVELYN, WITHOUT WHOM...LOVE, SAMUEL. (Pause) Without whom? Without whom what?

SAM: I don't know. Just fill in the ellipsis. I couldn't think of anything profound to say. Besides, "WITHOUT WHOM" sounds so dramatic. Now, see, you can have your morning fix, rinse out the mug, snap on the spout, and give the cactus his morning fix.

EVELYN: But, Sam, a cactus doesn't need much water.

SAM: Evelyn, that mug doesn't hold much water.

EVELYN: Sam, this mug will hold enough water to drown eight cacti.

SAM: Oh, well, since you've just gotten into this cactus craze, by summer we should have about twelve or seventeen cacti hovering about and it'll be a truly useful item to have around.

EVELYN: Oh. (Pause) Oh, no! You bought this so that we're even, right?

SAM: What do you mean, we're even. About what?

EVELYN: I bought you a pair of shoes yesterday, you bought me a mug with a spout today, so now it's my turn again, right?

SAM: Please, Evelyn, don't insult me. I just thought you'd like it. I mean, it's a unique gift, and it's something that you didn't already own and would never buy for yourself, right?

EVELYN: No, you're right. I didn't have one till now, and it's definitely something I would not have bought for myself.

SAM: See? And it's sort of a "conversation piece," too. That's what the saleslady said. (Pause) You do like it, don't you, Evelyn?

EVELYN: Oh, yes. It's truly unique. I'll just put it on the shelf over the refrigerator with the inflatable mugs that you got me last Christmas.

SAM: Okay. (Pause) Evelyn, I'm really sorry if I sound overly...possessive at times. It's just that sometimes you let me take advantage of you. Well, you know what I mean.

EVELYN: No. What do you mean, Sam.

SAM: I mean you let them walk all over you, treat you like shit.

EVELYN: That's what I thought you meant. (Pause) Sometimes I have been terribly...weak. I don't know. I'm afraid, I guess.

SAM: Of what?

EVELYN: I don't know! Well... Sam, I'm thirty-two years old.

SAM: So? I'm twenty-four.

EVELYN: I knew you'd say that. It doesn't make any difference to you, but at my age it makes a lot of difference. (Pause) I've never been married, Sam.

SAM: So? You'd end up divorced, anyway.

EVELYN: Maybe not.

SAM: Oh, come on, Evelyn. The way the divorce statistics are going up, within five years ninety-eight percent of all married couples will be getting divorced within the first three weeks of marriage. So, save yourself the trouble and cost of a lawyer, if nothing else.

EVELYN: I know. I know. It's just that, well, maybe I'm missing out on something.

SAM: Yeah. A lot of heartache.

EVELYN: I don't know.

SAM: Evelyn, would you ever have considered marrying Charles?

EVELYN: No.

SAM: What about Edward?

EVELYN: No.

SAM: Okay. Then tell Edward to go to hell, too. Why waste your time, if marriage is what you want.

EVELYN: Sam, I didn't say I was looking for a man to marry tomorrow. Oh, hell, why are we even talking about this? I don't sit around all day thinking about marriage. In fact, I never think about marriage. It's just in the back of my mind somewhere, I guess.

SAM: Good. Maybe you'll get over it.

EVELYN: Sam, remember when we put together that tour of children's shows last summer?

SAM: Sure.

EVELYN: That experience taught me more about adults than it did about kids. While the kids were being amused and entertained, the adults were howling with laughter. The adults enjoyed the shows more than their children did, Sam.

SAM: I remember.

EVELYN: And that incredible look of relief on the faces of parents when we took *The House That Jack Built* to the Art Fair. They walked through the gates with already bored, fidgeting children, saw our children's show stage, and sighed thankfully.

SAM: Yeah, they were thrilled to have a babysitter so they could go look at paintings.

EVELYN: But it was the parents who enjoyed the shows most, Sam. When they came to pluck their kids from the bleachers to go home, they practically always stayed to see the rest of the show—because the child wanted to, of course. The kid would giggle and the parent would roar with laughter. (Pause) I feel like the kid who is amused and entertained with life when I want to be the adult who really gets a kick out of it. (Pause) Do you understand what I mean, Sam?

SAM: No.

EVELYN: You don't?

SAM: No, I don't. I don't understand because it's not true. Evelyn, what more do you want? We have a theatre company that we've worked eight years for, a growing company that is finally getting some recognition, I might add, and you're attractive and men always stare at you when you walk down the street. I mean, I'm proud to be seen with you because I get the looks that you don't see—those "You lucky bastard" looks. It's great! It inflates my ego. You have a nice apartment that is affordable because you share it with me. And, I might also add that you are lucky to have me, as well. It's not every day that a person is lucky enough to have a wonderful, brilliant, charming, and caring best friend, you know.

EVELYN: I can't argue, I'm terribly lucky.

SAM: Then what's the problem?

EVELYN: I guess I'm just questioning too much, looking for too much.

SAM: Evidently.

EVELYN: But I still feel that way, Sam. (Pause) By the way, did you know that Ed's lease is up next week?

SAM: No, I didn't. That's too bad. It's always a hassle to drop by the manager's office and sign a renewal form. It takes at least five minutes.

EVELYN: Actually, he doesn't want to renew. He says he's been looking for a bigger place, but he's not found anything yet.

SAM: Well, I hope he finds one soon. It took us awhile to get this one, remember?

EVELYN: I remember. That was a long time ago.

SAM: Six years.

EVELYN: Anyway, Ed says that most of the apartments he's looked at are either too expensive or too far from the theatre.

SAM: That can be a problem.

EVELYN: He's on the waiting list at Anglewood Apartments over on Forty-third street. They told him it would probably be another two to four weeks before anything opened up, though.

SAM: Well, if things get really bad, we can roll out the bed we used for *Cinderella*, and he could sleep in the scene shop. Of course, he might want to take the ruffles off the canopy.

EVELYN: Actually, Ed had another suggestion. (Pause) He asked if he could move in here.

SAM: What!?

EVELYN: Just until he can find a place, two to four weeks, at the most.

SAM: I can't believe it! We get rid of one twit and now another one wants to move in! Evelyn, how could you! Come on, you'll be sick of Edward in another week, then we're stuck with him. We'll see him all day at the theatre, then all evening here. It'll be even worse than when Charles was here!

EVELYN: Sam, stop it! I will not be sick of Ed in another week!

SAM: Oh, great! Then we'll be stuck with him forever, because he'll *never* leave, then. I mean, why the hell should he even bother looking for a place when he can live free and easy under our roof, on our food, your bed, my Pucci. . .

EVELYN: Sam, will you listen to me, for God's sake! Ed is not going to walk all over me like Charlie did. I'm not going to let that happen again.

SAM: Ha!

EVELYN: Will you stop with the "Ha's!"

SAM: You're doing it again, Evelyn. This vicious cycle is beginning again. I can't stand it. Are you going to submit me to this forever? A new man every year?

EVELYN: No.

SAM: Yes, you are. And they are all handsome twits who wear Pucci.

EVELYN: By your definition, that is redundant.

SAM: *What* is redundant?

EVELYN: Handsome and twit are synonymous.

SAM: You're right. I was simply being redundant for emphasis.

EVELYN: Oh.

SAM: You have just blown me away. I suddenly realize how Dorothy and Toto must have felt. There are no vacancies here, Evelyn. Both the rooms are let. Just because half of your bed is empty, we don't hang out a "vacancy" sign.

EVELYN: I told him "no."

SAM: Well, before Edward moves in, I'm going to buy one of those two hundred dollar safes from Marshall Field's so I can keep all my valuables locked up. Can I borrow your Field's charge card?

EVELYN: Did you hear what I said?

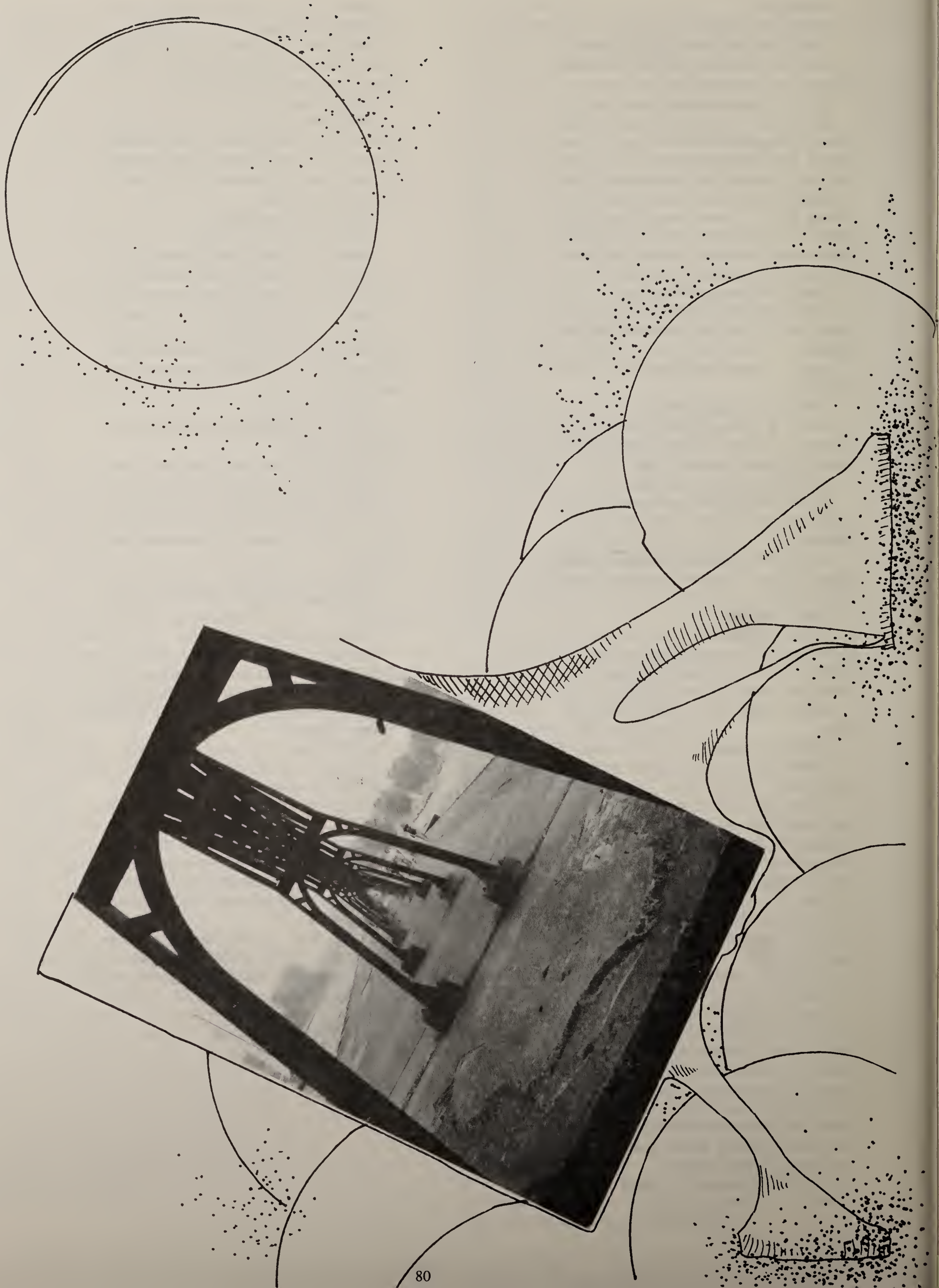
SAM: Yes, you said Edward is moving in, even though the only vacancy is in his mind.

EVELYN: No, I didn't. You just assumed that I said Edward is moving in. I said he *asked* if he could move in.

SAM: So?
EVELYN: I told him "no."
SAM (Pause): You told him "No"?
EVELYN: I told him "no." (Pause)
Aren't you proud of me?
SAM: You really told him "no"?
EVELYN: Yes. You and I are always happier when it's just the two of us living here. Besides, I told you before, I could never live with Ed. And I figured that if he moved in, he'd never leave. I mean, why should he, when he could just continue staying here—free and easy, under our roof, on our food, my bed, your Pucci. . .
SAM: Did you tell him that?
EVELYN: Well, I might have used other words, but they meant about the same.
SAM: I am truly proud of you, Evelyn.
EVELYN: Thank you.
SAM: I guess I finally made you realize just how much better life is when it's just the two of us.
EVELYN: I guess you did, Sam.
SAM: Why didn't you just tell me you told him "no" in the first place, Evelyn?
EVELYN: I missed having a good fight. There hasn't been one since Charlie left.
SAM: Evelyn.
EVELYN: Because you cut me off. You wouldn't let me finish my story. I tried to tell you, but you just kept going on about what a shit Ed is.
SAM: Well, he is a shit, that's for sure.
EVELYN: Sam.
SAM: So where is Edward going to stay now?
EVELYN: I don't know. I told him we could roll out the bed we used for *Cinderella* and he could sleep in the scene shop. But he said he didn't feel like sleeping under a mountain of pink ruffles. So, I guess he's going to stay with his brother.
SAM: His brother? He has a brother around here?
EVELYN: About ten minutes from the theatre.
SAM: That shit. (Pause) Evelyn, I am totally drained of all emotion. I'm not as used to fighting as you are. I think my blood pressure is starting to settle down, though. (Pause) I do think you should have been honest with me from the beginning. (Pause) You want to make it up to me by buying me a new pair of deck shoes?
EVELYN: No! No more shoes. Ever.

SAM: Then how about taking me to Bressler's 33 flavors for a sundae?
EVELYN: Because it costs me a fortune to buy you ice cream at Bressler's. You order all 33 flavors.
SAM: Please?
EVELYN: Sam, I've only got fifty dollars left until payday. I have forty dollars in there (large piggy bank) that I have saved diligently for a Scarlet Datura from Peru.
SAM: Another plant?
EVELYN: Another plant.
SAM: Isn't that a poisonous plant?
EVELYN: Only if you walk up to it and eat it or rub it all over your body.
SAM: I'll remember that. I could come in handy someday. If a Charles or Edward moves in, I can throw the Scarlet Datura at him and our troubles are over.
EVELYN: Sam.
SAM: We don't need any more plants, Evelyn.
EVELYN: And we don't need any more shoes, Sam.
SAM: Fifty dollars. The shoes I want only cost thirty. Then we'd still have enough money for Bressler's ice cream.
EVELYN: No.
SAM: But payday is only two days away.
EVELYN: No.
(Pause)
SAM: Not even just the ice cream?
EVELYN (Sighs, she's lost): Okay. Okay, ice cream. We'll go for ice cream. Okay?
SAM: Okay.
EVELYN: Just ice cream?
SAM: Just ice cream.
EVELYN: Okay.
(EVELYN gets purse and sweater; SAM grabs jacket; they start out.)
SAM: I don't want you to spend every penny you have on me, Evelyn. I really don't. You know, . . . (etc., ad lib from SAM)
(After their voices fade, we have SILENCE. Then, EVELYN opens door, reenters, picks up piggy bank, sighs, and exits.)

Lights fade
CURTAIN



The Sentinel

She lay abandoned, along the Erie track.
I found her, head laid limply across the unmindful rail,
Her solitary form strewn across the right-of-way,
Heedless of the cinders digging into her weary side.
From somewhere in the distance came the desolate wail
Of the Erie-Lackawanna, beckoning her destitute soul.
She made no move, as the tracks vibrated with the stark hum
Of death's approaching call,
But seemed to crumble even further across the cold, iron rail,
As if willing the darkness to hasten its claim over her dejected form.
Heartsick with compassion, I reached out to stroke her,
My spirit racked by the vision of such immense grief.
Her whiskers twitched cautiously,
but still she did not raise her stricken head.
Carefully lifting her small, furry form off the track and cinders,
I gently placed her across the checkered cloth in my berry basket.
She sank into its wickered shadows with a soft sadness that
Touched my very soul.
I carried her home and laid her on the warm bricks of my fireside.
She refused to drink and just lay there for hours,
Basking in the friendly warmth of the flames.
I kept a silent vigil throughout the night;
Fearful, lest I doze and her lonely spirit,
Feeling, once again, forsaken and unloved,
Would slip away into the darkness of the night.
But, at last, sleep betrayed my exhausted form.
The second day, she drank little, yet seemed to raise her head slightly
And lean towards the beckoning warmth of the fire,
Her silvery coat glistening in the reflected glow.
By the third day, she was keeping vigil over the flames
And seemed always to have been curled up on my hearth.
Now, no longer abandoned and useless,
She claims her place at my fireside;
A proud sentinel, keeper of the flames.
The lone pussy willow from the Erie-Lackawanna track!

Beverly Topa

The farmer delights in planes:
straight-backed heifers graze in pastures
neatly bound by
level-lined posts,
green patchwork rows of corn
and beans,
clean-furrowed fields.
Nature cannot abide this;
works against the grain,
groundswells surge and dip the posts
to silly a-symmetric shafts,
curve-cuts fields with
rainfed creeks,
strews the whole with burrs,
trees, bushes that resist
straight lines and domesticity.
It is a battle with no victors;
man labors for his
livelihood, Nature,
relentlessly, returns to
claim her own.

B.E. Balog



Millennial Harbinger

*Once up ahead on Interstate 70 near
Terre Haute I saw this big Buick hit
An eight-point buck that was already air-borne—
Had come bounding out of the woods and the mist.*

*There are stories about what happens—
Cars demolished by animals, people killed
Running into horses, or cows, or deer.
This one just glanced off the top of the car*

*And went on. The driver lost control
For a moment, wobbled back and forth, then
Managed to pull it over. I slowed down
When I went by to make sure he was all right.*

*The windshield was completely shattered;
He couldn't have seen out of it at all.
He was leaning against the wheel,
Covering his face with his hands.*

*I should have stopped but there were two trucks
Right behind me getting ready to pass.
That's rough country along that stretch—
Places where they've torn everything up*

*By the roots, and turned it over and put it
Back again, and said it was fine.
They've taken something out, though.
I saw what it was when the deer kept going.*

Jared Carter

Jared Carter, our choice for this state's poet laureate, graciously filled our request for his material with this previously unpublished poem. His most recent book of poetry, "Work, For the Night is Coming," breathes with a thousand lives and flows like a country stream.

Auto Wreck



Silkscreen Print by
Bob Price

It was another hot summer morning. The dirty window fan tried to circulate the humid air around the bedroom. The clock on the nightstand read 5:15 as Franky shut off the alarm that was set to go off at 5:30. He sat up in bed and started toward the bathroom. The floor was covered with dirty clothes and Franky cursed as he tripped over his boots.

"You'd better not wake up the baby or you're gonna feed him," his wife Mary warned in a soft but commanding voice.

He turned and saw her sitting up in bed. Her long hair covered her shoulders and her bare breasts were wet with perspiration. "If you would pick things up around here once in a while..."

Franky continued on into the bathroom. Since he was up early this morning, he decided to take a cold shower. He then found yesterday's jeans in the pile of clothes on the floor of the bedroom and took some socks out of his top drawer and a workshirt out of the closet. He went into the kitchen and placed a pan of water on the stove to warm while he dressed. After he put his boots on, he found a cup and made some instant coffee. Finding the taste bitter, he only drank half a cup and poured the rest down the drain. He picked up his keys, wallet, and wristwatch off the living room end table and went out the door.

Franky backed his pickup out onto Highway 44 about ten miles east of Franklin, Indiana. It was nearly a forty-five minute drive to Indianapolis where he worked in the shipping department of a small factory that manufactured jewelry. Highway 44 was a winding country two-lane with many sharp turns and narrow bridges. It took nearly twenty minutes to make it through Franklin and to Interstate 65, which took him north to Indianapolis.

Franky often thought of moving closer to work, but Mary insisted that they live in the country by her parents. His parents lived in Jasper, a small town about one hundred miles southeast of Franklin. He had come to Indianapolis to go to college but decided to drop out about half way through his freshman year when Mary became pregnant. They were married in a small wedding two days after his nineteenth birthday. Only the immediate families attended. Franky's job came up a few months later, and they moved out of Mary's parents' house into a rented mobile home.

Franky pulled into the parking lot of the small factory at about ten minutes before seven o'clock. He always liked to get there a few minutes early so he could find a parking space. Often the lot was full and he would park on the street. He found a spot in the back of the lot, parked, and started walking toward the main building.

When the seven o'clock whistle blew and the shipping line began moving, Franky was in place. His job was to take boxes off a line of rollers, label them, stamp them "fragile," and tape them shut. He then put them on another line of rollers that took the boxes to the storage room. He often fell asleep standing up and still kept doing the work.

At lunch, Franky ate two sandwiches out of a vending machine. Most days he only had a candy bar but today was Friday, the day that he got paid. He did not want to drink on an empty stomach.

After work, he headed straight for the Tip Top. The bartender cashed his payroll check and set him up with the first round. Other workers began to file in and fill the tables and bar. Franky dropped a quarter in a video machine and saved the Earth from invaders from outer space. After a few games, he found a stool at the bar and ordered another beer. An older man in his mid-forties took the stool next to Franky.

"I'll have another light," the older man said to the bartender.

It was obvious by his motions that he had started his drinking much earlier in the day. Franky sat quietly and ate some peanuts from a small basket on the bar.

"Does your mother know you're here boy?" the older man asked Franky.

Franky just ignored him and looked down into his beer.

"I asked you a question son," the drunken man said.

"No sir, she doesn't," Franky quietly replied.

"Well, I'll tell her tonight when I see her," the man said with an outburst of laughter. He then picked up his beer, paid the bartender, and went back to a table with some other men.

Franky continued to stare down into his glass of beer, feeling thoroughly insulted.

"Don't worry about him," the bartender said, "he's just a drunken asshole. He went to a doctor last week for a hemorrhoid and the doc told him it was a brain tumor."

Franky smiled and looked up at the man.

"Here," the bartender said pushing a beer across the bar, "this one's on me."

"Thanks," Franky said with a smile.

He was not really a heavy drinker and after about the sixth beer, Franky started feeling dizzy. He paid the bartender for the seventh but could not finish it. He went out the door and walked to the truck. He lay down in the front seat to rest for a few minutes.

When he woke up, his head was pounding. He glanced at his wristwatch and noticed it was a few minutes after two. He sat up, started the truck, and drove out across the empty parking lot.

The interstate was deserted except for an occasional semi. The air blowing in the window was cool. By the time he reached the outskirts of town, it began to rain. It was a very cold rain and came down steadily. He slowed to fifty miles per hour and reached the Franklin exit at about two thirty-five.

Franklin was quiet as he eased through the yellow flashing stoplights of the city. The streetlights lit up the wet main streets and the storefronts, but the town was empty.

Franky reached the edge of town and started down Highway 44. He knew the road well, but his headlights only lit up about forty feet ahead of him. It was a dangerous road to travel even in the light of day, so he drove carefully.

About five miles west of Franklin, Franky came slowly around a sharp turn and noticed the front end of a small car sticking up out of a ditch. He pointed the headlights of the truck toward the car and noticed that one windshield wiper slowly moved across a shattered windshield. The front end and hood of the car were crushed and the limb of a tree lay across the top.

Franky left the truck running and stepped out into the cold rain. He ran to the car and noticed the door on the driver's side was open. There in the ditch, water covering the lower half of his body, a man lay crying in pain.

"Help me," the man whispered when he saw Franky.

Franky stood in the water and bent over the man. His young face was covered with glass and blood. He struggled for breath as Franky tried to lift his head from the muddy ground. He pushed the hair from the man's eyes and touched a swollen cut on his forehead which reopened and bled uncontrollably. Franky tried to lift the man, but his right leg was caught under the car. He took his shirt off and placed it over the cut on the man's head. The water became deeper as the ditch filled, and he could not lay the man down to call an ambulance.

He kneeled in the water, his bare back exposed to the cold rain, feeling totally helpless. The man was unconscious now, and the cut on his head continued to bleed.

Franky heard a car coming around the curve. He screamed for the car to stop. The car slowed almost to a complete stop. Franky waved his arm in the air, hoping the driver would see him. Just when he felt sure the car would stop, the driver accelerated and the car disappeared over a small hill.

The cold water in the ditch continued to get deeper and Franky's arms and legs began to cramp.

It was nearly thirty minutes before he heard the next car. The water was close to two foot deep now. The car came around the curve and once again he waved his arm and screamed for the car to stop. The car slowed and as it pulled off the road close to the wrecked car, Franky noticed it was a county policeman. A light came on inside the car. He watched a heavy set man talking into the microphone of his car radio. He then opened the car door, took a raincoat from the back seat, and slipped it on as he ran down to Franky and the injured man.

"I've called an ambulance," said the policeman. "They should be here soon."

"Thank God you're here," Franky said.

The policeman kneeled in the water and looked at the cuts on the man's face. "He looks pretty bad. Let's try to move him out of this water."

"His leg is caught under the car," Franky said.

The policeman slipped his hands under the edge of the small car. "I should be able to lift this an inch or two. Try to pull his leg out when I lift."

The policeman strained and the car moved a couple of inches.

"Just a little more," Franky said as he tried to pull the man's leg out.

The policeman took a deep breath and raised the car another inch.

"I got it," Franky said as he pulled the man's leg free.

Franky helped the policeman carry the man out of the ditch and into the back seat of the police car. The policeman covered the man with a blanket and bandaged the cut on his forehead. He handed a towel to Franky who was sitting in the front seat.

Frank heard the siren and saw the ambulance come around the curve. The policeman opened the back door of the car and two medics carefully took the man out and put him on a stretcher. They carried him over to the ambulance, placed him into the back, climbed in, and shut the two doors.

Franky watched them disappear around the corner. The policeman started asking him questions and filling out reports.

"Please call me and let me know how things turn out," Franky said to the policeman after the reports were finished.

"You had better just call the hospital in Franklin or see if they say anything in the newspaper," said the policeman. "I won't be back on duty until Monday."

Franky got back in his truck and drove home. By the time he got home, it was nearly five o'clock. He unlocked the front door and went straight to the bedroom. He checked his sleeping son in the crib. The baby was laying quietly asleep. Mary was asleep on the bed. Franky took off his wet boots, socks, and jeans and got a towel from the bathroom. He dried his hair and body and climbed into bed. He put his arms around Mary and kissed her softly on the bare shoulder. He laid quietly as light began to fill the room, thinking about the wreck on the highway.

Barry A. Underhill

life is a music

*what I cannot have,
possess,
grip to the curl
of my fingers,
I can only cherish,
love—
elusively,
tenuously*

*contemplate,
and then let go—
it is mine
and never mine—
feeling it go,
I am unendurably
alone
with it: it is
always stealing from me:*

*the sun
balancing
on lavenders
of western cloud*

*a voice
calling
from beyond
neighborhoods
of uncertain dream*

*the rich—
wrought
petal
of magnolia
falling*

*snow melting
into puddles
of April sky*

**1st
Place
Graphics
Award
Ernest A. Balog**

*life is a music
that by fading,
ending,
is what rich sound
it is: in that pause
called nothingness
life returns upon itself
empty-handed
and fulfilled*

Charles B. Tinkham

HELLO MOTHER

Across the bottom of the screen in the movie theatre came the words: AIRMAN ADAMS...REPORT TO THE OD'S OFFICE IMMEDIATELY...AIRMAN J. ADAMS...REPORT TO...

Before the message was completed, I was already up and stumbling past the other airmen in the row of seats. Behind me, my date tried to follow me in my haste.

"Jo...Jo! Wait!" he called in a loud whisper as I reached the darkened aisle.

I didn't even glance at him. I left him as I continued on...my mind in a jumble. The Officer of the Day called someone to his office in the evening hours only if there was an emergency. All I could think of was my mother—something was wrong with my mother!

It had been almost a year since I'd joined the Air Force—and I had not even tried to write my mother. Deep inside, my heart grew until it felt as if it would burst. Regret consumed me. Why, oh why, hadn't I at least tried?

Outside the theatre, a warm breeze softly pushed against the tall palm trees that lined the pathway that led to the business offices of the base. The spring night was lighted by a sky full of stars and a full moon, but my eyes were clouded with memories. This memory had already taken me from this California base to a small house in Greenville, South Carolina—back to the home I had left. Once again, I was outside my mother's bedroom door, hesitantly reaching for the doorknob.

The door creaked as I inched it open. I shuddered as the strong smell of boric acid enveloped me.

Inside, the room was dark. The windows were closed, the Venetian blinds pulled, and the drapes tightly drawn to keep all light from intruding.

By straining my eyes, I could faintly make out the bed and the still form of my mother—covered only by a sheet. The sound of her deep breathing hung in the stale air. Her face was partially covered by a washcloth.

For years Mother had been ill off and on—but this time, her illness had her almost completely bedridden. She had told me that the doctors had diagnosed that it was a nerve problem that had caused her illness—the dizziness—the confusion—the swelling of her facial features. Her eyes were constantly glassy, and when she talked, she slurred her words.

The boric acid was used to bathe her face, so it was by her bedside continuously. Mother refused to allow anyone outside the family to come into her room. Vanity about her youthful looks kept her isolated when she didn't feel that she looked her best.

I had noticed that Daddy's patience with Mother's bouts of sickness was wearing thin. His visits to her room had become fewer and fewer. So Mother had begun to depend upon me even more than usual. Every day, as soon as I got home from school, she demanded more and more attention. My brother and sister were both younger, so naturally most of the responsibility fell on my shoulders—or at least I felt as if it did.

On this day, however, she was sleeping, so I breathed a sigh of relief as I slowly pulled the door shut.

Walking to the kitchen, I put my schoolbooks down on the table and began to plan supper for the family.

Much later that night, I heard loud voices coming from behind Mother's closed door. My room was across the hall, and down a little, but I could hear the angry tones clearly. It lasted only minutes, and then Daddy came out—and slammed the door behind him. With wide eyes and a pounding heart, I listened to the muffled sobs he left behind. Sadness filled me as I turned away from the books that were open on the desk before me.

It seemed that this was the way their conversations always ended—when they did talk. I knew that all Mother wanted from Daddy was his attention—and all that Daddy wanted from Mother was for her to get well.

Tears overflowed my eyes and found their way downward—falling on my clenched hands in my lap.

Then—as if from far away—I heard Mother's voice, "Lee! LEE! Please come back!"

Daddy didn't answer.

She called again—louder, "LEE! LEE! PLEASE COME BACK!"

Again and again, she called—but still there was no answer.

Finally, I couldn't stand it any longer, so I went to look for my father. He was in the living room absorbed in the newspaper—or so it seemed.

"Daddy, Mother's calling you," I said.

"Yes, I know—I can hear her. I'm reading the paper," he answered, not even raising his head.

I gazed at him for a moment, and then turned away. On the way back to his room, I stopped and slowly opened Mother's bedroom door.

The light from the hallway fell across her, and she moved her arm to shield her eyes from the light.

"Mother, Daddy's reading the paper right now. He'll be in after a while to see you. Can I get you anything?" I asked, trying, in a little way, to help her.

"No...that's all right, Jo. But leave the door open, okay?" she answered.

I walked down to my brother's room, and stood in the doorway. He looked up at me, and for a moment, we just stared at each other, shaking our heads.

"At least, Ellen's not here to hear it this time, Brad," I said.

"Yeah! Thank goodness it's her night to work at the restaurant," he responded.

"I wish it was my night to work," I said, as I turned and went back to my studies.

After that night, it seemed that Mother got worse for a while—shaking all over, not eating—crying out in her sleep. I often stayed home from school to take care of her.

Then slowly, she began to improve.

Soon, she became her old self—sweet and loving to all of us. Daddy responded to her and our homelife became steadily better.

Then—it started all over again.

When I saw Mother's glassy eyes once again, the same terrible feeling began to gnaw at my stomach and dread filled my heart. I went to my room and dropped to my knees—burying my head in the covers and praying.

But things got worse. I tried to talk to Mother, but she only said that I'd understand someday.

It wasn't long afterward that I found out what was causing her illness.

It was early on a Saturday morning—Mother was in the bathroom, and I was making her bed. I tossed the sheet to the floor, and reached for the pillows, I gasped in surprise as I stared at the hoard of brown plastic medicine bottles that lay underneath. Some were empty—but some were filled with pills—all different colors, shapes and sizes. I began to read the labels. There were sleeping pills—tension pills—nerve pills—and more sleeping pills.

From deep inside, fear came stealing over me. "Oh, my God!" my thoughts raced, "no wonder she's the way she is!"

In school we had studied the effects of taking any kind of drug in excess—and even though I knew little about it, I knew immediately that what I had in front of me was in excess of what anyone should take.

"What are you doing, Jo! What have you got?" Mother had come out of the bathroom and stood staring at me, her eyes growing wild.

As I turned around with the bottles in my hands, she almost knocked me to the floor as she tried to grab all of them at the same time. I felt the strength in her hands as she touched me. With surprise and grief, I watched as she clutched the bottles to her bosom.

"Leave these alone! No one cares how I feel! I need this medicine. Don't you see? They help me...your Dad won't help!"

"But, Mother! You're doing yourself more harm than good. Please listen to me." I was pleading with her. "Mother, don't you know that before anyone else can help you—you have to help yourself? You taught me that yourself!"

"I am helping myself. These pills help me sleep, Jo! I can't sleep without them—my nerves are too bad!"

There was no reasoning with her—yet I tried. But it was to no avail.

For days afterward, I tried to think of what to do—who to turn to—how to solve the problem. Finally, I went to Daddy—only to find out that he knew all about it, and felt that Mother was hopeless. He'd done all he could. There was such a look of unhappiness on his face that I went to him and put my arms around him. As he hugged me, he spoke, relief in his voice.

"In one way, I'm glad you know, Jo. It's been hard to carry all this around and not have anyone to talk to about it. But I'm sorry you know at the same time...understand?"

During the weeks before I was to graduate from high school, I wrestled with the knowledge that my mother was addicted to drugs. I was only eighteen years old, and yet I felt as if I were older than my mother.

I began to wonder how I could stay at home and watch my mother kill herself. It was that week that the recruiter for the Air Force came to our class at school.

Neither of my parents came to my graduation from high school. The day afterward, I enlisted in the armed forces.

But before I left—I had to find a way to help my mother—I just had to!

Without telling anyone, I gathered all the brown plastic bottles from underneath Mother's pillow, put them in my purse and went to see one of the doctors listed on the bottles.

"Well, young lady," the doctor said as he leaned back in his chair, gazing at me with smiling eyes, "what can I do for you?"

Without a word, I opened my purse and began lining up the bottles on the desk in front of him. When I finished, he had a question on his face.

"Doctor, why are you killing my mother?" I asked.

The older man pulled himself up closer to his desk, a look of anger covering his face. Then, he began to examine each bottle in front of him. As he read, the look of anger was replaced by a frown.

"My God!" he exclaimed when he set the last bottle down. "How long has this been going on?"

"For months—even years. If she can't get to the drugstore, she calls and has the medicine delivered. There seems to be always one more bottle hidden somewhere."

Silence filled the room as the doctor digested what I had told him. Then suddenly, he reached for the phone and dialed a number.

"Sam, this is Doctor Gaylord. I have a patient, Mrs. Lee Adams, who has been refilling medicine on a regular basis. Please put it on your record that if she wants *anything* refilled, it first has to be okayed by me—personally! All right? Okay, thanks."

As he hung up, he smiled at me. "Young lady, your mother is lucky to have you. You only want to help her, don't you?"

"Yes, sir," I answered.

"Well, sometimes it takes someone like you to put others back on the right track."

And with that, he proceeded to call all the drugstores in town.

"Jo! I hate you!" My mother screamed at me. "Why didn't you mind your own business! You've ruined it now! I might as well die! Get out! I never want to see you again!"

The cruel words slapped me in the face. It was awful—the hate I saw in her eyes was real. I stumbled out of the room.

She never spoke to me after that.

Once again, she began going into withdrawal from the lack of drugs. She would shake so much that Daddy would have to hold her down. I couldn't have felt worse.

Then came the day that I was to leave for Lackland Air Force Base in Texas. The house was quiet as I packed my bag and cleaned my room for the last time.

Ellen and Brad were there beside me, sadness on their faces.

"Why are you going, Jo? What will we do now?" Ellen's voice seemed to accuse me of desertion.

"Ellen, I'm afraid to go off on my own—and yet I'm afraid to stay here and go crazy. I just have to get away," I said, trying not to cry. "You know Daddy can't afford to put you through college. Maybe I can make enough money to help the two of you—I don't know—but I'm going to try."

I had only one small suitcase to take with me, but I took my time putting it in the car—hoping that my mother would at least tell me goodbye.

But the door to her room remained closed.

Then, as the car moved away, I gazed back to the house at 107 Wilbanks Street—and I saw her.

Faintly, through the screen door, I could make out the shadow of my mother watching me leave. Her hand was halfway raised.

The car went over a hill, and I lost the house from view. That was the last time I would see her.

Now, before me, there was another door—the door to the OD's office. My hand shook as I turned the knob.

"Airman Jo Adams reporting, Sir!" My voice sounded as if it belonged to someone else as I saluted the officer on duty.

"Oh, yes. Airman Adams, go down the hall to the third door on the left. The Red Cross representative would like to see you." As he returned my salute, his manner was impersonal and seemed so far away.

The hallway was only partially lighted and the emptiness of the other offices caused my footsteps to echo in the dim quietness. With each step, the lump in my throat climbed higher.

"Airman Adams! You're Jo Adams? Oh, my dear—you've come unnecessarily. We're looking for a young man. There must be another Joe Adams on the base. I'm so sorry!"

Hurriedly, I turned and rushed away from the look of apology—down the hallway—on past the Officer of the Day, and out into the warm night air.

The next thing I knew I was sitting alone on a bench, sobbing. The pent-up emotions were eased by my tears.

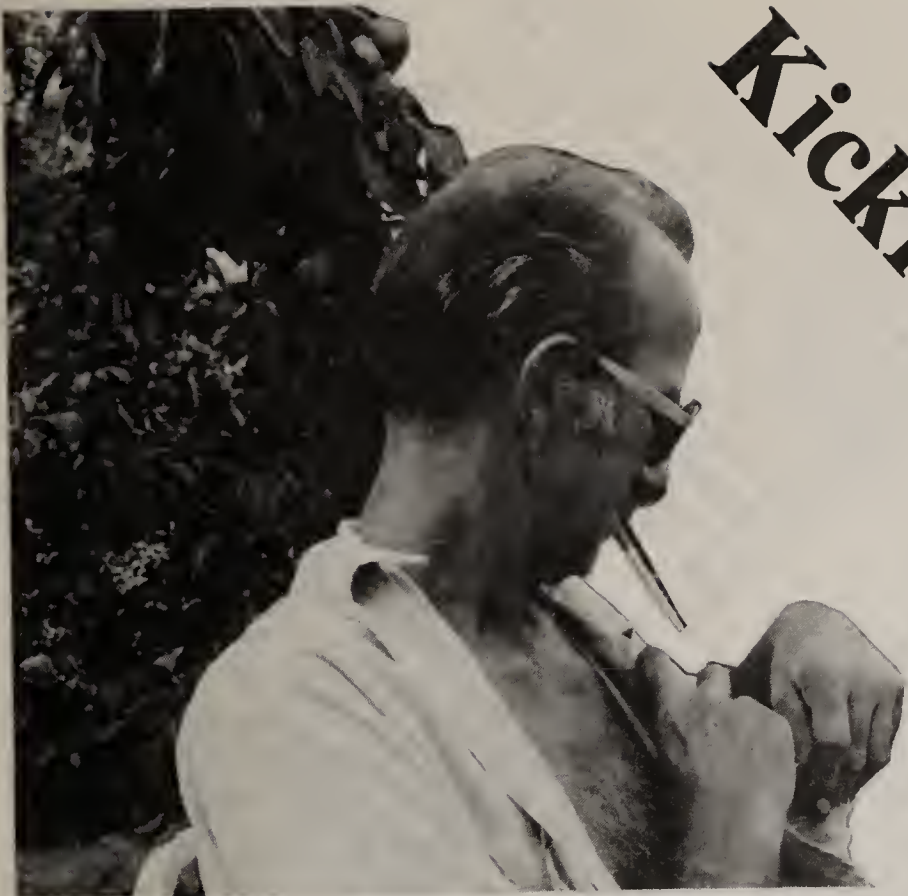
And, as I cried, I came to a decision—I knew what I had to do.

It was only minutes later that another door closed behind me, and I put my coins into the slot on the payphone. I dialed the number—and in the distance, the phone rang.

"Hello," she said.

Then with my heart pounding loudly, I smiled and replied, "Hello, Mother."

Amy Garza



Kicking the Habit

Kicking the Habit

We were going out to dinner with three other couples on a Saturday evening. The table wasn't quite ready so we were standing around talking in the lobby of the large restaurant. Fred was talking to me about the virtues of the front-end-drive cars. His business was cars and I was interested, but he was smoking a cigarette as was his usual habit. Everyone in our group knows that smoke bothers me, and they usually will not smoke near me.

I moved a few feet and turned away while I coughed two or three times. Fred followed me and continued to puff. The cigarette hung in his lips and the smoke poured into my eyes and nose. I moved away again and Fred came up close, still puffing.

I kicked him in the shin, not hard, just enough to be felt. Fred looked up at me in surprise. "What are you doing?"

"I'm kicking," I replied.

"Well, don't do that! It hurts!" said Fred. I kicked him again, not hard, just enough to annoy.

"Why are you doing that?" he asked, rubbing his shin but still puffing on the cigarette.

"I don't know. It's just a habit of mine," I replied, and kicked him again.

"Well, break your habit," Fred said, "at least when you're around me."

"I've tried. I just can't help myself. I have a compulsion to kick."

"Don't you know that's annoying?" Fred said as he eyed my right foot which was getting ready again.

"I suppose it is," I replied, "but it's a free world, isn't it? I have a right to kick if I want to, don't I?"

"Not when my shin is in the way!" said Fred, with feeling.

"Then you'll just have to keep out of the way when I feel like kicking." Fred looked at me carefully while he took another cigarette from his pack and lit it from the one he had just finished. "You've got a very annoying habit," he said. "You ought to try to break it."

I rubbed my eyes and walked away from the new cloud of smoke. This time Fred didn't follow me, but just shook his head.

I don't think he ever got the idea.

Irwin Rosenak

Geese

*Playing counterpoint
In a cacophonous concert,
Sounding the Aries theme
On the amplified tiles
Of my city garden,
The perennial geometry
Of the migrating geese
Transcribes, note for note,
Wind, feather and north
Into a supersonic omen,
While held silent
Amidst traffic syncopations,
I learn to follow
The eclectic fusion
Of sky, city and soul.*

Annie Guilbeau Stearns

Ol' Red

The mornin' Talbert's troubles began didn't seem no different from any other day. We fellas was jest settin' round the store, way we had long as Willy Jones was talkin' 'bout a snake skin he'd brung in, showin' it off a mite.

"Yes, sir," he was sayin' in a voice that was as low and flat as a three engine freight train. "I jest grabbed 'im by the tail and swung 'im round over my head. K--t on a swingin' til I come to that oak at the corner of on that ol' tree. He's got eighteen rat'lers and a button." Willy stretched the skin out 'cross the counter so's we could 'preciate it better.

"He's a big 'un all right," said old John Creet, wipin' his nose on his sleeve and stuffin' a chaw in his cheek with his free hand.

The rest of us fellas thought hard on this for a while fore answerin'.

"Yep," Joe Bradley finally agreed. "Yep," said Tobiah Zeeley after a little more thought. Us fellas wasn't overmuch for snap judgments.

We sat that for awhile starin' at the skin. After a time I reckoned I'd seed enough of it and my eyes kind of wandered round Talbert's store. It 'peared to me the flour sacks and the canned goods was fightin' at the belly-up flies. Course I wasn't one to find fault, specially since Talbert's as good a place as any for a fella to pass a few hours. Leastwise, it was long as Martha stayed away. Martha was Talbert's wife and she tormented Talbert and anyone else unlucky enough to cross her path. Seems like us fellas agitated her even more 'n most, though I couldn't see why, seein' as how we didn't do nothin' 'cept pass the time of day with Talbert. I reckon Martha was jest one of them women who couldn't abide seein' a fella settin' still. Jest when Talbert and us would settle in good, she'd come in from cookin' or sloppin' the hogs and start in on him 'bout cleanin' the shelves or gettin' the Baby Ruth wrappers off the floor.

did go a little crazy, since he promised her he'd build her that new house she'd been wantin' the minute she was well enough to go home. When she got prised us all—specially Talbert—and promise—puttin' her hand on her heart and breathin' heavy ever' time he'd try to wiggle out of it. Now she had her new house with fancy carpetin' and skinny legged furniture and Talbert said as how he felt like he was livin' in one of them museums, 'stead of a home. The doctor told Talbert that Martha warn't to be upset on no account whatsoever, least she'd have another of the spells. With a shrew-tongued everybody else'd had to go round humerin' her and then cussin' out the next person who come by jest to get even.

Jest so's he could keep the peace, Talbert had learnt to move when Martha hollered, but sometimes it got to be too much. Them times he'd try to make hisself feel better by sellin' used comic books to the bean pickers for a dollar a piece. If'n he still didn't feel no better, he'd set in to yellin' at Smith, the handy man who shuffled round helpin' out and jest generally gettin' under foot. Smith'd jest look kind of dumb-like, then scrunch up his watery blue eyes like thar was some joke goin' on that nobody knowed but him. Maybe thar was.

Anyways, that mornin' we was admirin' the skin when Martha came in riled as an old wet hen when the rooster didn't show.

"Talbert," she said in her whiny pitched way. "I can't find ol' Red. Somebody left the gate open and he ain't nowhere to be seen. Has you'uns seen him?"

Martha turned her mean look on us fellas and we shook our heads fast-like, 'fore she could ask any more questions. We all knowed she'd act a fool over that ol' dog of her'n and we didn't much care to get in the middle of nothin'. Tobiah told us his sergeant back in WWI warn't near so hard to take as Martha when she was riled.

"Well, keep a look out for him, Talbert," Martha went on. "I got to go up to town with Emma Jean. When Red comes round, you put him in the yard and fasten that gate. Like as not, you left it open in the first place."

With that, Martha gave us all one more evil look and clomped out the door. Soon as she'd gone, Talbert let go a groan and leaned on the counter a mite heavier. We'uns all knowed as how he couldn't abide dogs ever since one had taken a chunk off a his ear back when he was a little fella. Martha's mangy ol' hound was worst than most, 'cause Martha fed it from the table and acted like it was her young'un. The pitiful truth of the thing was that no matter how much Talbert hated the dog, warn't nothin' he could do. Martha'd always been stubborn as a gov'ment mule, and since she'd had a spell with her heart 'bout three years back, nobody'd dare cross her. She'd been took real bad-like and we all figured she was a goner. She lay back in the hospital bed and moaned until Talbert 'bout went crazy. I reckon he

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91

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"Sure, Talbert. We ain't nothin' to nobody," Job nodded.

"But what about the rest of us?" asked about a dozen men who were looking at them coal on, so much like Stoner's

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"I don't want none o' nothin' 'bout this to nothin' here's right. Martha got to swear not to say a calf if'n she finds out. I mean it! Swear!"

The fellas looked at each other, as how Talbert's fakin' redder and redder. Well, he might be gonna have a own, so John Creet spoke up, "Talbert, you got to nobo' f us."

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"It ain't like that dog not to come home to eat," she complained, clumpin' 'round in her fancy new kitchen.

Talbert and me was plunked in front of the TV, watching Sheriff Lobo arguing with some Yankee. Talbert said he knowed how the sheriff felt—there was no understanding Yankees. Why, they'd cheat themselves, with no help at all. Once, one had stopped at the store and offered to buy an old rag quilt Martha had hangin' on the back of a chair. Wanted to give him fifty dollars for it, too. Talbert said he was tempted, but figured the Yankee must know somethin' he didn't if he was willin' to pay that kind of money. Talbert, being nobody's fool, folded up the quilt and hid it away. It had mildewed and rotted a little now, but leastwise he figured no Yankee had got the best of him.

"Talbert!" Martha kept on. "I said Ol' Red ain't here yet. I'm gonna get Smith to drive me 'round lookin' for him."

"Oh, now, Martha, don't do that." Talbert's face was gettin' red again. "Like as not he's got hisself a bitch somewheres. Let him alone."

Martha grumbled, but seemed to forget the notion of lookin' for the dog. Talbert figured that was because the preacher was comin' in tomorrow and she had to get ready for that. Each time he came, Talbert said she acted like she was 'spectin' the King of England. Normally that rankled Talbert, but for once he was glad to have somethin' keepin' Martha busy. She had spent the afternoon cookin' for the preacher and that wife of his who didn't look like she could find a cook-stove if she had to. I, myself, warn't overly excited 'bout the preachin' since I'd knowed Brother John since he was knee high to a bumble bee and even in them days he'd get up on a stump and preach for anybody who'd give him a nickel. 'Peared folks was payin' him more'n a nickel these days, since he drove a low slung Caddy and had got hisself a wife who prissed round lookin' like she smelt something peculiar. Folks would flock up to the Baptist church ever' time John come 'round and pay him to tell 'em how worthless they was. Talbert, hisself, had laid by a goodly sum 'tween overchargin' the pickers and buying up foreclosures at the sheriff's auction, but us fellas speculated as how John had come by a good lot more jest by tellin' people they was no 'count. Thar's some things in this world that don't bear figurin' out, I always say.

As things turned out, thar warn't no preachin' the next day after all. One of John's kids had got squirmy durin' a sermon and decided to stick a bean in his nose to kind of liven things up. Once he got it in, he couldn't git it out, so's John had to rush him into Knoxville and spend the next two days at the hospital. The bean got took cared of all right, but by then John's wife had caught herself the hysterics, and it took a lot of hoverin' and prayin' to git her straightened out.

Soon as Martha found out thar warn't no preacher a comin', she was in the store hollerin' to Smith to drive her lookin' for the dog. Smith stared up from his sweeping, cornered as a treed possum. Talbert didn't pay no mind to the pleadin' look, just shrugged and handed him the keys to the pickup. He watched Smith shuffle out after Martha and I saw his shoulders slumpin' down a little further.

Three days later Martha was still at it. Talbert concluded that 'tween the gas and Smith's wages, he might a done better jest tellin' Martha the truth and takin' his chances. 'Course he was in too deep now. Thar warn't no goin' back.

"None of you'uns seen my red dog?" Martha'd ask ever' time she came in the store. Us fellas would shake our heads and start in talkin' louder, til prutty soon she quit askin'.

Then Talbert didn't hear nothin' 'bout the red dog for a week. It warn't like Martha to let go of somethin' that a way. Usually she worried a thing 'round like a cat with a mouse. If ol' Talbert had felt itchy 'bout lyin' to Martha, he felt even worse soon as she quit harpin' on it. Could she've found out and jest be waitin' for him to slip up? Or had she given up on findin' the danged dog? Either way, Talbert didn't feel easy 'bout the situation. He knew Martha could never a kept her mouth shut if'n she'd knowed. Why, she'd be on him day and night, ravin' and rantin' and findin' ways to make him miserable. But takin' it from the other side, it'd be even less like Martha to set back and let things go. It was enough to make a man crazy!

Talbert thought a time or two about bringin' up the dog jest to kind of get a handle on Martha's thinkin', but ever' time he got his nerve up, he'd look at Martha's tight, straight lips and reckon against it. So he paced 'round the store or snuck 'round the barn for a nip now and again, feelin' all the time like a skunk at bay.

Next Saturday mornin' Talbert was leanin' on the counter listenin' to the farm report while we was a listenin' to him a fussin' bout beef bein' down again and him havin' fifty head chompin' up the lower forty. He reckoned he could hold on to them and hope prices go up, or sell now and danged near give the cows away. He was allowin' as how things seemed to get rougher every day when Tobiah come into the store, the weekly *County Leader* tucked under his arm. Tobiah got a pop from the cooler and settled into a chair. We fellas nodded howdy and Tobiah handed us the *Leader*.

Martha was up to town gettin' her hair done up like a cow chip, leavin' Talbert busy fillin' an order for Jenny Ray Johnson. It warn't til Jenny Ray left that Talbert knowed somethin' was up. He stared at us and at Smith who'd stopped chewin' tobacco and was leanin' on the pop case. We was all a lookin' at him peculiar-like, but not sayin' nothin'. Joe Bradley pulled out his knife and started wittlin' hard on a stick.

The quiet got too much for Talbert. He hopped from one foot to the other, then cleared his throat and peered over the top of his glasses. He looked like he didn't know what the heck had gotten into us, but he warn't 'bout to stand 'round all day waitin' to find out.

"Anything in the *Leader*, Tobiah?" he asked.

Talbert's question made us fellas squirm 'til Tobiah finally roused hisself and pushed the paper toward Talbert.

Talbert took it and squinted at the front page. Nothin' there that could account for all them peculiar looks we fellas was givin', just the usual stuff 'bout the sheriff's boys chasin' a speeder through two counties, and the government checkin' on welfare fraud. Talbert looked at the full length pictures of the Miss Wildwood Flower contestants in their high hair and long dresses. Still nothin' out of the ordinary, fer as he could see.

Talbert went on a thumbin' through the *Leader*, feelin' us a watchin'. We could tell right when he saw it cause his eyebrows shot up over his glasses like the sun risin' in the Smokies. Stuck in, right thar 'tween the "Stonemountain News" and the "In Loving Memory" columns, it jumped out at Talbert like a tit on a boar hog.

"Lost: Big red dog answered to "Red." Reward. Call Martha Houston 693-3702."

Lord, Lord. So this is what that woman had gone and done.

Advertisin' in the paper for a dog dead and buried! Goldern, this was too much for a body to bear. We tried to sit like nothin' was goin' on, but we all could see Talbert's face gettin' that bonfire glow.

"Ain't no need to worry 'bout Martha kickin' off," Talbert started in a sputterin'. "Hell, no! Ever'body pussfootin' 'round makin' sure she don't get no sudden jolts to upset her. Gettin' her way all the time just by sighin' and holdin' her heart. No, no use worryin' over her. It's me, Talbert Lee Houston, who's gonna be the one to keel over deader than a doornail jest from tryin' to cater to that damned woman."

Talbert shook his head and we shook ours.

"Well," growled Talbert—"ain't a danged thing to do about it now."

"Nope," agreed Joe.

"Nope," I said.

"How much you reckon one of those thar ads cost?" Talbert asked us after a while.

Three weeks passed and still Martha kept puttin' in the ads. Talbert lost weight and hardly spoke, fearin' one day he'd just blurt out the whole sorry thing if he onest opened his mouth. Us fellas took to hangin' out at Brook's store jest to give things time to settle down. Cattle prices dropped again and the fence in Talbert's east pasture got busted up by some kids hotrodding. Only Smith stayed 'round to listen to Talbert complain 'bout the sad way life had gone and done him.

I moseyed down late of an afternoon 'bout a month after the first ad.

"Things been steady downhill ever since that dog got kilt," Talbert told me. "Why, I almost wisht that no 'count mongrel was back 'mong the livin'!"

Whilst we was commiseratin' together, the phone rang.

"Yep," he answered. "This here's the Houstons. What? What'd you say? Dog? Why, that ain't possi____" Jest then Martha come through the door and grabbed the phone from Talbert's tremblin' hand. She'd heard Talbert say "dog" and that was all she was a needin'.

"This here is Martha Houston. Yep, yep. That thar sounds like him. Sure, thar's a reward—a hunderdt dollars! Thank you kindly, Mrs. Bensen." Martha glared at Talbert who sank into his chair, his eyes glazin' over like a dyin' squirrel.

"They done found Big Red. Law, after all this time. I can't hardly believe it!" Martha was babbling on crazy-

like. "I'm gonna' go up yonder tomorrow and pick him up. Smith kin drive the pickup. Law, law, imagine Red gettin' all the way to Fenton County."

Talbert said he felt right sick to his stomach and took a big dose of Pepto Bismol. Martha left out of the store to hunt up Smith and I set with Talbert to try and ease things a little. I figured that was the least a fella could do when things had got to that kind of state. Then sudden like, it hit him. He jumped up and started laughin' and a slappin' his knee like a crazy man.

"Why, ain't no way that dog could be Red! Martha'll go up thar and find that out. Then maybe she'll drop this fool dog business." It'd cost him half a tank of gas, Talbert reckoned, but it'd be worth it jest to hear the end of that thar dog. Then maybe things could get back to normal. Us fellas would come back to the store, Martha could get on with the cookin' and cleanin' and Talbert could get hisself a little peace and quiet.

"Yep," Talbert said, "sure would be nice to have things settled down regular like. A body shouldn't have to put up with all this foolishness." Talbert smiled and looked happier than he'd looked since the day Jim Hardy walked in with that dog collar.

Next mornin' Martha come in the store lookin' for Smith to take her up to Fenton County. Talbert was so tickled with things goin' the way they was that he said he'd drive her hisself. Martha looked funny for a minute, then smiled and went off to fetch her pocketbook.

Talbert started laughin' again and told me to come along for the ride. After all, he said, three didn't use no more gas than two and, besides, he wanted somebody else along when he finally got the best of Martha. Prutty soon the three of us was headin' out toward Fenton County.

When Talbert pulled up in the driveway, we could hear a dog barkin'. Mrs. Bensen was standin' on the porch wipin' her hands on her apron.

"Howdy, folks!" she hollered. "The dog's out yonder, right behind the shed." I whispered to Talbert as how I figured we'd a come across him without no help atall, seein' how the barkin' 'bout deafened a fella. "You'uns jest walk on over and see if'n its yours," Mrs. Bensen said, still a smilin'.

We picked our way through the chickens 'til we got to the dog, tied with a clothesline to the fence.

"Red!" Martha hollered.

The dog stopped barkin' long enough to look at her. Talbert snickered behind his hand and I jest stood quiet-like, waitin' for it to hit Martha that this warn't her dog.

"That's him, sure as the world!" Martha said.

Talbert and me couldn't believe our ears! Why, that dog was no more Red than I was. Oh, the color was the same, but that's where it ended. This dog was a scrawny, dumb looking thing with a chewed up left leg and one wall-eye that made it 'pear to be lookin' two places at once.

"Martha, that ain't Big Red!" Talbert hollered. "That thar dog ain't a bit like him. Jest look at that leg and that eye!"

"Oh, I see, Talbert! Poor Ol' Red, you got yerself all beat up somewheres, didn't you? Poor ol' boy." Martha started talkin' to that poor excuse for a dog like a mama to her young'un.

The dog had stopped barkin' and was rubbin' his head against Martha's knee. Talbert looked fit to be tied.

"But, Martha," he was sayin. "He ain't got no collar! Red had a collar!" Talbert was beside himself. The dog was lickin' Martha's hand by then and wimperin'.

"Course he ain't got no collar now, Talbert. He's been gone near on a month. Lord only knows where. You wouldn't expect no collar to stay on that long, would you?" She shot us a look like we was dumber than bricks and started walkin' toward the Bensen's. Talbert saw her a gropin' in her big black pocketbook as she walked.

"I'm gonna give Miz Bensen a little somethin' extree for all her trouble—feedin' Old Red and all," Martha called back over her shoulder. "Then we'll take him up to the vet and get him fixed jest like new!"

Talbert said his stomach sunk like it done that time up to the fair in '38 when his pocket got picked. We trudged behind Martha, watchin' her broad hips swayin'. Talbert's shoulders drooped, his feet dragged. The red dog was whinin' pitifully and I could tell ol' Talbert saw his life stretchin' ahead of him—it warn't a prutty picture. I took a look behind us at the hound. He stopped barkin' and his good eye looked straight at me. I could of sworn that ol' dog was a grinnin'!

Trish Arredondo

Literary Contest Winners

Although, as a non-profit student organization, the Skylark staff does not issue financial awards, we do feel that the high quality of work submitted to the magazine deserves special recognition. The contest is conducted in the strictest and the most objective manner possible. To insure this, all submissions were accepted and screened by me first. The names of the people submitting material were either separated from the manuscript or concealed by me before the selection committees read the entries. Committee members were directed to keep silent if they thought that they recognized someone's work. The selection process was time-consuming and lengthy. The staff and I worked very hard to guarantee the integrity of the magazine. I believe our efforts have been rewarded. The following were judged as representing the best of their respective categories.

S. Littleton Uetz, Editor

Prose

- 1st Place
Getting Over It
by Debra A. Smith
- 2nd Place
Blues for Johnny One Shoe
by Gentry Lee Smith
- 3rd Place
In the Wink of an Eye
by Jim Thorley

Poetry

- 1st Place
Poker Face
by Beverly Topa, pg. 28
- 2nd Place
The Photographer
by Tom Frazee, pg. 42
- 3rd Place
Too Much, Too Little
by Donna Strabavy, pg. 28
- 4th Place
Tapestry
by Linda Knight Preston, pg. 17
- Award of Merit
The World's Need
by Henry P. White, pg. 17

Graphics

- 1st Place
Ernest A. Balog
Photograph on page 86
- 2nd Place
Thomas J. Purcell
Photograph on page 73

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